

POPULAR NOVELS
BY
HAROLD BINDLOSS

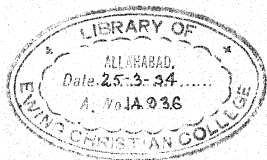
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THE HARDER WAY
HARDEN'S ESCAPE

A MOORSIDE FEUD

BY

HAROLD BINDLOSS



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A MOORSIDE FEUD

I

THE BORE-HOLE

RAILTON'S horse was tired and he followed the cattle slowly down the curving trail. Behind him, dark pines climbed the foothills, and in the far background the Rockies' snowy tops were touched by ethereal blue. In front, the high Alberta plain rolled East under the sunset and dipped to a valley where a sinuous belt of trees marked a river channel.

Where the pines got thin and scattered, Railton stopped his horse and looked about. Snow-blink, sun, and alkali dust had darkened his skin ; his shirt, at one time blue, had faded, and its dull green harmonized with his bare, olive-brown arms and brick-red neck. His head was slightly tilted, and he sat his tired horse with a sort of repose that was altogether unconscious and had nothing to do with fatigue, although for three days he had kept the foothill trails. His face was thin and his glance had an aquiline steadiness, but his eyelids slightly drooped, and for all his youth, faint wrinkles marked their corners. Men get the queer fixed look whose eyes must search the plains when the bitter dust is blowing.

Jim Railton was not a large man ; he was rather hard than muscular, and he carried the sort of stamp one vaguely calls thoroughbred. Yet he could handle

a horse like a cowboy and use the axe like a log-camp chopper. Now he felt his youthful rawness, and when he studied the spacious landscape his mouth went tight.

Thin dust, floating about the scattered trunks, marked the cattle's slow advance. Their tails swung, and where one tossed its head long horns shone in the sunset. Ten yards off, Mike Connor rolled a cigarette. Only his fingers moved; his horse's head drooped to the dusty grass. He was for long Railton's father's man, and Jim knew him stanch and shrewd. Sometimes he talked, and swore, like a good Canadian, but sometimes his Celtic philosophy baffled Jim.

Two miles off, where the pines stopped, a ranch house occupied a flat round which a small river looped. The light was fading from the plain, but a pillar of smoke and steam went straight up from the trees. When Jim began the climb to the hill bench he had wondered whether he would see the smoke, but he did not know if his emotion was altogether relief. Sometimes renewed suspense is worse than the disaster one braces oneself to front.

"The drill is yet running, Mike," he said.

Connor turned leisurely. His leg touched his horse's side, the animal jerked up its head, and steel links jingled.

"The boys engaged to stay with their job. And why would they not? I would like their pay."

"The pay will soon stop. I expect the company owes them something, we can get no news from Frensham at Vancouver, and my money's gone."

"Would you reckon he is at Vancouver?" Mike inquired. "Seattle is not inconvenient, and if you do not like the cars, you can take a steamboat up the Sound."

Jim saw the implication. The bore-hole was in Canadian Alberta, but Seattle is in the United States.

• "The steers are moving faster. Come on. It will soon be dark," he said.

He touched his horse and they followed the herd downhill. Hoofs clicked on stones and dust floated up the trail, but Jim noted the sweet resinous freshness where the sun had touched the pines. At the bottom of the hill the trees rolled back, and on the stony soil the grass was white and dry. Jim heard the stalks crackle under his horse's feet, and in a hollow where moisture had lingered he smelt wild peppermint. He knew and loved all the sounds and smells of the quiet tableland. One yet felt the warmth the hot earth gave out, but a cool wind began to blow from the Rockies, and where a distant grass fire burned the trembling orange reflections got bright. Now the sun was behind the mountains, the vague plain melted, and the cattle in the trailing dust got indistinct.

For half an hour Jim followed the herd across the flat, and when all were in the corral gave his horse to Connor and went to the house. The ranch house was not spacious, although his father had used the largest logs he could move, and the roofing shingles were split on the spot by hand. Some had cracked in the sun and perished, and Jim had thought to replace the lot by British Columbian sawmill stuff, but he had needed all the money he could get. Yet the house was homelike and not altogether primitive, for his Canadian mother was a woman of some cultivation. For two or three years after his father died she had helped him nobly, but the strain perhaps had broken her, and for twelve months Jim had carried on alone. Now, unless his luck turned in the next few hours, he knew himself beaten.

When he left the corral a light sprang up and he saw a man waited at the top of the steps. Jim knew his neighbour, Redmayne, whose ranch boundary touched the Railton block. In summer one moved

the cookstove outside, and a narrow red gleam marked its front.

"I reckoned you'd be home for supper, and I lighted her up," Redmayne remarked. "Did you find the steers all right?"

Jim nodded. When food got short on the dry plain, they had moved some beef cattle to a valley where the grass was fresh.

"They have put on weight. As soon as we can, we must load them on the cars for the sales at Medicine Hat. It looks as if we might need the money. But the drillers carry on?"

"If nothing breaks, they'll stay with it until noon to-morrow. The tube's down in hard stuff, and there was not an indication in the last core she brought up. Anyhow, supper is ready; I guess you didn't bother about cooking when you nooned."

Jim, shouting for Connor, carried a tin basin and a large coal-oil can to the steps. If he splashed the kitchen, he himself must dry the boards, and in summer the creek was his bath. In winter, unless a soft Chinook blew, he for the most part went without. The water soothed his mosquito-bitten skin, and when he sat down for supper he hoped he could calmly take the knock he expected soon to get.

Redmayne was a good cook and Jim acknowledged him a useful neighbour. Now he sat down near the lamp, the grey in his hair got distinct and his look was tired. His ranch, like Jim's, was small, and to meet the competition of richer men on the large blocks got hard, particularly where gasoline machines helped the others. Up-to-date machines were expensive and Jim had begun to think them the poor man's antagonists.

At the ranch house the bill of fare for breakfast, dinner, and supper, did not vary much. The potatoes were yet in the hilled rows, and the group was satisfied

with bacon, beans, and yeast-powder bread. When their appetite was blunted, they talked rather languidly about cattle and a projected irrigation scheme, but they said nothing about the bore-hole which interested them most. By and by Jim got up.

"I think I'll go see what the boys are doing, and I might camp at the engine house. Are you going along?"

"I'll use your bunk," said Redmayne. "When the drill stops I want to be around. If I was boss at Ottawa, all boosters would be shot."

In some circumstances, Jim thought he might be willing to join the firing squad, but he laughed and went down the steps.

"The young fella' has guts," said Connor. "When he's hurt he'll fight. Looks as if he might get hurt."

"He might get broke, and you'll soon be looking for another job. Well, I reckon I can't hire you."

Mike smiled, a queer, thoughtful smile. The other knew that wherever he went in the cattle country he'd command first-class pay.

"Ye will not be asked, and ye cannot break the boy. Twenty years I was with his father, and as long as he's needing me, I'm the young fella's man."

"Railton was a pretty good neighbour. I don't know if he was an easy boss," Redmayne remarked.

"He was just. All he said, he did, and sometimes he'd do more; but the divvle himself could not cheat him. Man, I can picther him on the old pinto horse; his lip stiff and his eye like a fish-hawk's. It was like a fish-hawk's. I've seen him stop a coyote, stealing through the brush, with his single-shot Marlin; a hundred and fifty yards we stepped it, an' the light not good. He knew when ye were lying, and when ye saw his smile, ye forgot your tale. His word at any time was as good as a ten-dollar bill."

"Railton was like that," Redmayne agreed. "In

some ways, the boy's his son all right ; but I guess the boosters would not have persuaded the old man to mortgage up his ranch."

"Jim's mother was Canadian. In Canada, yes have the herd feeling, and ye're easy to stampede. An Englishman calculates."

"Maybe so. I'm a damfool, anyhow ; but you're certainly not English and I've known some Mikes talk as if you hated all the bunch."

"Sure we talk," said Connor. "'Tis a habit we have. An' why would we not ? But yes need some discernment to thranslate our remarks."

"There you have us beat. What the h—— is the use of talking when nobody knows what you mean ?"

"Railton knew," said Mike. "His was the sort that in Ireland we mislike most ; the hard bleak sort the black North breeds. But for twenty years I was his servant, and when the stampeding herd rolled over him I was at his back."

"You got two ribs broke. Now I s'pose you'll refuse a foreman's job and stay with young Jim ?"

"Ye would not have wan logical," Mike remarked.

Redmayne got up and went off to bed. Mike cut some tin-flag plug tobacco and sitting on the veranda steps reloaded his pipe. For a few moments the smell of the sulphur match floated about, and then the snow-cooled wind carried down the foothills the smell of the pines. Mike was very quiet, and when his pipe went out, an owl planed down on noiseless wings and circled a few yards from his head. He hated restless movement, but when there was need to move he jumped.

In the meantime, Jim Railton steered for a gap in the folding hills. A belt of deeper gloom marked the valley, and on one side vague, black pines pushed out into the dewy grass. The creek he followed got noisier, but by and by the explosive snort of a high-pressure

engine pierced the water's monotonous note. Then red sparks leaped up behind the trees, and by contrast with the pines' cool sweetness, Jim smelt greasy steam.

Stumps and tangled branches bordered the trail through the timber, and where the trees rolled back red reflections leaped about the bent, dark figure of a man who threw cordwood into a furnace door. The boiler was upright, and when the resinous blocks crashed through the glowing stuff on the bars, flame spouted from the stack. Jim touched the fireman.

"You are driving her hard."

"Yeah," said the man and turned his scorched face from the blaze. "Wind's coming down the mountains and she eats the wood. When the cord's used up we stop."

"Did you get any indications in the last dirt you lifted?"

"You can go see," said the other, and gave Jim a lantern. "My notion is, if you want coal, you got to buy it at Lethbridge."

Jim crossed a few yards of boggy soil and lifted the lantern. Where a boring-tube is driven down, the stuff it cuts is carried to the top, and the cores lay in even rows. Each supplied a geological section of the ground through which the tube had passed, and Frensham's geologist declared the strata was a replica of the strata in which the Lethbridge miners worked. Jim had begun to doubt. Anyhow, the Lethbridge miners had long since found coal, but Frensham's men had not. He stooped to examine the last core, and frowned. The stuff was binding clay, mixed, like a pudding, with lumps of hard stone.

When he put back the lantern water splashed about his boots. He had stepped into the channel that carried the water from the small clapboard engine

house. A derrick like a skeleton pyramid straddled the roof, and the inclined timbers cut the sky; the dark, vertical line up the centre was the end of the boring-tube. The shack door was fastened against the wall. Inside, a driving-belt slapped a pulley and dim reflections twinkled on revolving steel. Water splashed, a pump clanged, and the engine throbbed on a deep, rumbling note.

Jim went into the shack. A young fellow leaned over the engine and followed the slamming crosshead with his oil-can's spout. Once or twice he touched the slides and brasses, as if he imagined the metal got hot. Another man, in a bunk along the wall, studied a torn newspaper. Jim had begun to know something about engines and he thought the piston's stroke was laboured. For a moment or two he fixed his eyes on the revolving tube that came down through the roof and went into the ground. Its wet surface glimmered in the lamp's smoky beam, and one knew it span, but, so far as Jim could distinguish, it did not sink.

"I suppose she is going down?" he said.

"She's not going fast," the engineer replied. "The dirt is kind of binding, and when she hits the lumps of grit she kicks. Sometimes you might think she was cutting through a nigger head."

A nigger head is a large, hard, round stone. Jim had imagined the stones were near the surface; anyhow, one now and then knocked up a plough point; but he was not an expert and could not guess the sort of stuff the deep boring-crown pierced. Yet, if the stuff were but clay and rubble, he would soon be broke.

Water splashed noisily on the iron roof, and welled up in a muddy basin where the tube went into the ground. A thin horizontal line across the metal marked the joint with the next length, but Jim thought

it did not sink. He shrugged, and crossing the floor to a box against the wall, lighted his pipe. He was physically tired and he had for some time borne a heavy strain. He was not hopeful, but in the morning, and perhaps sooner, he would know his luck.

II

THE BROKEN TUBE

A PUFF of cool wind, scented by the pines, blew in at the door and for a few moments banished the smell of oil. Jim languidly turned his head, stretched his legs, and tried to find a softer support for his back. For three or four days he had steered his cayuse up and down precipitous trails and for half the night had kept cattle guard. He was tired, but suspense banished sleep. The end of the tube was near the top guide and the engineers would not join up another length. Moreover, they thought the saw-edged boring-crown was worn, and if they were forced to stop the engine, they would stop for good.

In the meantime, the measured beat and clang was soothing and Jim dully mused about his fight to carry on the ranch. He had not thought to be a cattle man, and when his father died he was at Toronto University, but since his mother needed him he did not stop to graduate. The block Railton had long since pre-empted was small, the cattle he could feed were not numerous, and he grew some wheat. Jim reckoned him a first-class farmer, but the Alberta tableland is dry, and the irrigation ditches had not reached his homestead. When the rainfall was lighter than usual the wheat perished and the green food he sowed for his live-stock withered. Jim, however, imagined the worst drawback his father had fronted was economical.

. On dry soil, mixed farming and ranching did not pay. If one hoped to get rich in a cattle country, one's holding must be large ; in order to grow wheat for a profit, one must go East to the black gumbo belt in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In fact, when he first took control Jim had pondered his English uncle's letter.

The letter was kind. James Railton stated that he got old and his house in the hills was lonely ; he hoped his brother's wife would come across and make Goldsike her home. Railton thought he could engage to give his nephew a proper start, but if the boy was keen about farming, he could occupy himself usefully at the sheepwalk on the moors. On the whole, Jim was willing to go ; the Western frontiersman is instinctively a roamer, but he saw his mother hesitated, and he refused.

Mrs. Railton declared she had long been happy at the foothill ranch. Moreover, she, too, got old ; she was perhaps conservatively Canadian, and at Goldsike she must use English rules. Then they did not know James Railton, and sometimes Jim was obstinate. Suppose, after a time, he and his uncle found they jarred ? He could not go back to the ranch, and he might not get a farm bailiff's job. Jim was not altogether persuaded, but he agreed, and until Mrs. Railton died he carried on at the ranch.

He was not sorry he had indulged her, but the fight had been hard and got worse. His cattle must not range across his boundary, and he could not grow artificial grass and clovers for a profitable herd. On the large ranches, stock followed their nomadic habit and roamed about when food was short. Besides, the rich men fixed the prices and they were helped by expensive machines. When Jim's father pre-empted his land he used horses and human muscle, and both were cheap.

Jim looked up. The engine was running faster and the tube span smoothly ; but for the flicker of light on its surface, one would not know it moved. In the dark outside, water splashed. The engineer rubbed his greasy hands and began to sing. His companion rudely ordered him to stop, and when the lurid dispute was over Jim mused about the Boom.

His habit was to use his opportunities, and at Toronto history and political economy had interested him, although he admitted his studies had not helped him at the ranch. It looked as if a boom was peculiarly a North American phenomenon. There had, of course, been booms in England and France ; the famous South Sea Bubble, the railway speculation in the early eighteen-hundreds, De Lesseps' Panama adventure, and some more ; but, after all, so far as Jim knew, they were not numerous. When British and French speculators got badly stung they for long went cautiously.

North Americans were more hopeful, or perhaps more trustful. Anyhow, for all their individual independence, their habit was to follow the crowd. In consequence, they could be stampeded, and sometimes exploited, by people who knew how to work upon the community spirit. It looked as if Jim himself had been exploited, and must pay for his folly.

All booms, however, were not engineered ; the proper word perhaps was *framed*. Some were spontaneous and in a sense justified. For example, where useful minerals were found or a new railroad was built, if you bought mining stock and land, you might, and sometimes did, get rich. All the same, you might speculate in mines that were sunk only to help the boosters sell you stock, and buy town lots where a city never would be built. So long as a large number of people believed the investments sound, the stock went up, but when all crashed the boosters got from under and left you to meet the bill.

The boom began in the Fraser valley and, spreading across British Columbia, worked like a ferment on the Rockies' eastern slope. Frensham arrived in the foothills with an American geologist and two gentlemen he stated were Canadian mining experts. In about a month he floated three companies to sink prospect shafts; and then located a seam of coal under the Redmayne and Railton ranches. Where the creek cut the hill bench, the strata was exposed, and his geologist declared the stuff was the sort of stuff in which the Lethbridge coal was found. He had, moreover, a large diagram of synclines and anticlines, and with its help he traced the seam across the map. The coal, he argued, was obviously there. All one had to do was to bore for the vein.

Perhaps the strange thing was, nobody doubted. Frensham was plausible, his audience was willing to get rich quick, and the boom fever had begun to carry men away. Redmayne and Jim were infected, and in exchange for some expensively engraved stock certificates they transferred to Frensham a part of their land. Jim admitted he was rawly trustful, but two or three sober storekeepers put up a good wad.

Well, he had grounds to be ambitious, and now he thought about it, when he refused to join his uncle in England his resolve to indulge his mother did not account for all. While he studied at Toronto, his little pal, Helen Garside, had grown to a remarkably attractive girl. For some time he was satisfied to enjoy her society when he could get across to the Garside ranch, six or seven miles off. He was not consciously in love with Helen, but he was happier when she was about.

Mrs. Railton died, and Jim was forced to weigh things. He did not yet think himself passionately in love with Helen. They were rather friends than lovers and their friendship was marked by a sort of tranquil confidence. All the same, if he could by and by support a wife

like Helen Garside, he knew she was the girl for him. In the meantime, to think about marriage was ridiculous. The Garside ranch was large and Garside was something of a cattle king. The Railton pre-emption was altogether too small for a ranch and too dry for a farm. Jim imagined he ought to sell, and locate in the Assiniboine wheat belt, but he did not go.

After a time, Frensham arrived, and hoping to get rich soon, he took the rash plunge. The coal was not as near the top as the experts thought, but the boom continued and nobody was much disheartened. Moreover, Frensham argued that since they had used a good sum, they must hold on in order to get their money back, and as soon as the drill touched coal, speculators in Vancouver and Victoria would willingly supply fresh capital. He had not reckoned to develop the mine; the company was but an exploration company whose business was to prove the seam.

The shareholders agreed. Some drew on their bank roll, Jim and Redmayne mortgaged land they had not yet transferred, and the drilling went on, but no coal was brought up, and it began to look as if the boom might break. Speculative stock was freely offered, but was no longer freely bought. When one thought about it, the thing was queer. But a few weeks since, a strange optimistic confidence infected all who had money to invest. Wherever a bore-hole was sunk people believed the drill would cut a mineral vein; they believed a city would spring by every locomotive round house along the track. The stock certificate you bought in the evening for fifty dollars was in the morning worth fifty-five.

Jim, however, had refused to sell a dollar's worth of Exploration stock. He and Redmayne bored for coal because Frensham had persuaded them coal was there, and he had perhaps inherited a love for a mining risk from ancestors who tunnelled the English hills.

The engineer again began to sing; about a little old cabin down south of the Dixie line, and narrated how he went back there and found the cabin desolate. The rhythm and the engine's beat did not synchronize, the doleful ballad was suggestive, and Jim began to think about Helen Garside. When he afterwards recaptured his watch by the spinning tube, he reflected that he thought about Helen last.

To some extent, for her sake he had stopped in the West; for her sake he had begun to bore for coal. Yet he had not, since they were children, told Helen he loved her. His reserve perhaps was strange. Helen was kind but rather proud, and for all her frankness, somehow elusive. Her cultivation was higher than his, and he sensed in her moods and emotions on which he could not work. Yet Helen and he were frankly flesh and blood, and each was happier in the other's society. It was perhaps typical, but to think about Helen rather soothed than thrilled him. He was tired, and suspense at length had dulled his brain. Although he had not imagined he could sleep, the engine's throb got indistinct, his back slipped down the wall, and his head drooped——

He thought he heard a jarring noise, and then a roar like a waterfall. It looked as if a cloud had burst in the hills and a flood was coming down the creek. Jim jumped to his feet, and saw the shining wheel and belt had stopped. The noise continued, and he knew steam blew off. The engineer tranquilly rolled a cigarette; his mate pulled some tools from the box.

"Have you stopped for long?" Jim inquired.

"We have stopped for good," said the other. "Tube's jammed. Maybe the foot piece has opened near the boring end; I've known it happen. Anyhow, she won't go down, and to pull her out will be some job."

The suspense was over. To know where one stood was something, and Jim's keenest emotion was perhaps relief. After all, he would sooner take a knock than wait when logical hope was gone.

"I suppose you will lift the bottom core?" he said. "Let's be frank. What sort of dirt d'you expect to get?"

The young fellow studied him. Railton's look was cool, although his mouth went tight. One knew he knew himself up against it, but he had some sand.

"Same as the last core, boss. I guess you got to *buy* your coal."

"I reckon that's so," said Jim. "Well, you and your partner are experts; you have bored for coal before. When you saw the cores come up, did you believe we'd bottom on a good seam?"

"You never know," remarked the other, with a crooked smile. "You didn't hire me, Mr. Railton, and the first thing a driller has got to learn is, he mustn't talk. My business was to report to the syndicate's president."

"Quite! Somehow I imagine Mr. Frensham did not inquire. But let's put it another way. Suppose I had offered you, a few weeks since, fifty dollars' worth of our stock for five dollars? Would you have bought?"

"I might—at two and a hafe. After all, you and Mr. Redmayne have treated us like white men."

Jim pondered. The compliment was perhaps the fellow's apology for not using the proper rules, but it was not important. Jim was young, and when he moved he moved fast. He began to think some speed might be justified, but when one got going one ought, as far as possible, to know where one steered.

"Now I expect you would not risk ten cents? However, it's done with, and since boring plant is expensive you will, no doubt, pull up the tube. Are you going to wire Mr. Frensham?"

"In the morning," said the engineer. "Just now we are going to sleep, but after breakfast I'll borrow your rig. They relay messages by 'phone to the railroad from Maybury. Twelve miles, isn't it?"

"Something like that," Jim agreed. "Good night, boys!"

When he took the trail to the ranch house, he pondered rapidly. He imagined Frensham had not emphasized the importance of his getting news as soon as possible, and the implication was, he did not expect the drillers to find a seam. Anyhow, he probably reckoned on their carrying on for another twelve hours. Then, since the bore-hole was twelve miles from a settlement, before people knew the drill had stopped a day or two might go, and so long as the drill was supposititiously running, the company's stock might be sold. Jim pictured Frensham's efforts to unload all he could push off.

At the house he got a light, and shook Redmayne, who jumped from a bunk along the wall. There were two bedrooms, but in summer Jim was satisfied to live like a frontiersman. Redmayne had not pulled off his clothes, and he looked about, as if he were dazzled by the light.

"What's the matter? Have they struck coal?" he asked.

"They are quitting; the tube's broken. Unless we get action quick, we are broken."

It looked as if the news roused Redmayne, and Jim resumed:

"In the morning, the boys will telegraph Frensham. The message, of course, must go by 'phone from Maybury, and their notion is to borrow my rig. I believe they can't ride, and they could not catch a horse that was unwilling to be caught. Well, my driving team will not be about, and you must see yours is not in the stable."

Redmayne nodded. Jim was like his father; the young fellow could front a crisis, and his brain worked fast.

"I'll fix it. They must hike to Garside's, and they'll start after breakfast. Maybe they'll take dinner with him, and from his place to Maybury is fourteen miles. All the same, we can't beat the telegraph to Vancouver."

"That is so," Jim agreed. "My fastest time to the railroad is three and three-quarter hours, we must wait for the express at Calgary, and Calgary is six hundred miles from the coast. But the newspaper prints the C.P.R. time bill."

He studied the greasy newspaper, and knitted his brows. Although motor roads cross the Alberta plains, the foothill trails are rough, and he and Redmayne used a rig. The Pacific express must climb the Kicking Horse Pass in the Rockies, and then across the Selkirks, and her time to the coast was not fast. Jim pulled out his watch.

"We have to reach Vancouver as soon as possible after the telegram. Frensham holds a useful sum that belongs to the company, and sooner than face a show-down he might start for the United States. He could get the Seattle boat up Puget Sound, or the cars for Whatcom. I don't know when they start, but I expect the service is daily, and he might be forced to wait in town for a night. Anyhow, we have got to hustle. Your team is faster than mine."

Redmayne smiled and started for the door.

"Get into your city clothes and watch out at the trail fork. Soon as I've turned the team loose, I'll pick you up on board my nephew's automobile."

III

JIM STARTS FOR THE COAST

FOR ten minutes Jim waited at the trail forks. A faint cold wind blew down from the hills and he felt the dew touch his skin. The hot soil smelt, and far back in the west a dim, white peak brooded in the sky. But for the splashing creek all was quiet. The engine at the bore-hole had stopped, and when it restarted it would pull up the drill.

Jim set his mouth. The bore-hole was done with ; it looked as if he himself were done with. He loved the high, spacious country and its rushing north-west winds, but if he stopped, he must take a job. Since he knew something about horses and cattle, Garside might engage him ; but Jim smiled, a crooked smile. He did not see the old fellow allow his daughter to marry a ranch foreman. Then, although Helen was not shabbily ambitious, she was cultivated ; for some years, she was at a famous American college.

Since Jim was at the University some time had gone and he had not graduated. He could not now begin to study for a professional career. Besides, Frensham had got his money and he had some grounds to think Frensham a cheat. Well, when they made Vancouver he would soon find out.

Where the plain rolled a flickering beam touched the grass with silver ; then dazzling headlamps topped the rise, and Jim stepped into the trail. A rocking car stopped noisily, and he got on board.

"The car is your nephew's? I didn't know you could drive," he said.

"Depends on where I am," Redmayne modestly replied. "On a speed track I might be awkward, but I can push her along a prairie trail. Young Tom is camping in the foothills with his University naturalist pal. They took my horses, and I took his car. But if you got down behind the screen and lit my pipe, I could take a smoke."

"I'd sooner you watched out," said Jim. "Looks as if you'd got to *jump* her along the trail."

For the most part, the track was torn by wheels and dotted at the middle by clumps of grass that grew between the holes horses' feet had ploughed. At some spots, however, the grass was gone and the light touched a grey belt where the mud a thunder-storm had left crumbled in the sun. Dust had sifted into the hollows and partly hid the ridges, the car rocked and strained, and for a time Jim concentrated on trying to ease the shocks he got. He must not be flung against Redmayne, who held the wheel.

The car went down on one side and Jim thought he heard springs crack. All her body, however, was straining, and harsh noises marked her advance. She recovered, and Redmayne for a moment looked up.

"Gophers," he said. "At the soft spots the ground's like a honeycomb. I wonder why the brutes dig their holes just where the wheels go."

"It's not important," Jim rejoined. "Our business is to make the station before the Calgary train pulls out."

"If nothing breaks, we'll get there. Frensham is not going to carry off the wad. I allow I was a dam-fool, but I thought the deal was square. So long as a boom keeps going, you do think all is square. At all events, if she does crash, you reckon you will get out first."

"And allow the wreck to fall on the other fellows'

heads? Well, I suppose we are a hopeful, but perhaps not a particularly noble, lot."

For a time Redmayne concentrated on his driving. The car bucked and jumped, and now and then laboured in loose dust where the spinning wheels could not get proper hold. By a sloo that had dried in a hollow, the dust was alkaline; Jim felt its salt touch on his lips and the faint smarting of his eyes. The hard, smooth soil was covered by a sparkling crust and cracked in a sort of geometrical pattern.

"You are off the trail," he said.

"Sure I am," Redmayne agreed. "The blamed trail goes round the sloo, and the rigs cut her up when the ground was soft. The boys yet go round, because they went round before. A teamster's like an Indian and an antelope; he keeps the line he knows."

"I expect we are all like that," Jim remarked with a laugh. "Anyhow, our trails and the animals' are not straight. We follow the loop about a scrub belt that got burned last year, and a jack-rabbit hates to cross the long grass somebody has cut down. All the same, you are now going straight."

"I'm running to beat the schedule, Jim. The train won't wait."

"So far, we are on time. The trouble is, we can't beat the telegraph."

Redmayne chuckled. "Well, we got a flying start. After breakfast the drillers will pull out on foot for Garside's to borrow a rig. Mike is going to Garside's, but he goes on a horse, and when the boys arrive there won't be a harness team in the corral. I don't see either of the fellows stopping long on board a fresh cayuse."

Jim did not. The men were mechanics and probably did not walk much. They might reach Garside's in two hours, and then they would be fourteen miles from the telephone. Fourteen miles, in the scorching

sun, was a pretty good hike, particularly for a man whose occupation was to oil a machine.

He looked about. Under the lamps' tossing beam, the parched grass rolled back in silver waves, across the backs of which the darker-coloured trail went like a steamship's wake. When one looked up, pale stars dotted the sky's wide arch, and in the North the Plough slowly swung. Other stars had moved. Jim could not see his watch, but the car now ran smoothly, and he knew she was on time.

"We will get the train," he said. "I doubt if I'd have done so on the best horse I've got."

"I'll wait until I see the depôt. You never know when a car will let you down," Redmayne remarked. "The only machine I have much use for is a locomotive. A railroad's a community service, and although the traffic bosses squeeze you on the rates, they squeeze you all alike. Bore-well pumps, tractors, and gas machines in general, help keep the small man down."

"Sometimes I think that is so," Jim agreed.

"Sure it is. The rich men can buy power plant, but we cannot. Helps them feed stock cheaper, but when I sell beef steers I must take their price."

"An economist I studied at Toronto states the worst farmer, on the poorest soil, fixes the price."

"Pshaw!" said Redmayne. "The old fellow calculated wrong, and anyhow the modern economists have exploded him. Where a big man's tractors haul his gang ploughs straight across a three-twenty acre block, he cuts the cost some cents a bushel on all the wheat he grows; but you can't get more for yours because you use a horse. If I want tractors and windmill pumps, I've got to mortgage up my ranch, and I can't do it. She's so plastered you can't see her skin."

Plaster implies a loan secured by bond, and Jim's

laugh was sympathetic. He had not imagined Redmayne had heard about Adam Smith, but the frontiersmen he knew were not at all the primitive swash-bucklers some film writers portrayed.

"My place is mortgaged," he remarked. "Frensham has got the money, and a larger sum others put up, and although boring is expensive, he cannot have used the lot. Well, I admit I'm anxious; but we really do not know he means to cheat."

"Nobody knows," said Redmayne. "I'm going to find out. If, when we started the bore-hole, he reckoned to hit the seam, we got a fighting chance. All the same, some mines are sunk to sell you stock, and when the promoter gets your money he packs his trunk and quits. But you want to hold tight. Ground's pretty rough in front."

The plain rolled and grass covered the pitfalls on the hill. The car laboured, plunged into holes, and skidded in the grooves wagon wheels had ploughed. She reached the top, and when she started down the incline the wind chilled Jim's skin. Then bracing his legs, he hardly saved himself from a plunge into the screen.

"Aren't you going rather fast?" he gasped.

"You don't have to talk," Redmayne replied.

His boot rattled on the floor, as if he felt for something from which his foot had slipped. His shuffling search was perhaps rewarded, for the car leaped ahead. When the wheels struck an obstacle Jim felt her jump, and since the lumps and holes were numerous, her advance was something of a steeplechase. Jim was young, action and speed fired his blood, but he reflected that his business was to get the Calgary train, and to be flung into the grass would not help.

"Try your other foot," he shouted.

It looked as if Redmayne did so. Brakes jarred, wheels skidded, and torn grass leaped about the tyres.

Jim lurched forward off the seat ; and then Redmayne pulled her straight and they leaped ahead almost as fast as before. Jim said nothing. Redmayne, flung about by the savage jolts, perhaps could not keep his feet where they ought to be, and had forgotten he might use his hands. Anyhow, one must not rattle him, and when one could not stop a young range horse one sat tight and let the brute go. The trouble was, although a young horse got tired, the car might not.

At the bottom of the incline Redmayne got control, the savage jolting stopped, and Jim looked about. The headlamps' beam was less vivid and he saw stars reflected in a quiet lake. The stars, however, were dim, and he thought the salt crust by the water's edge began to be distinct.

"I've got her now," said Redmayne in an apologetic voice. "When she bucked my feet went up, and when they came back they weren't where I reckoned ____"

"Oh, well," said Jim, "I expect one ought to stay with the job one knows. We do know something about horses."

"In Canada, you hook on to any old job you can get. Maybe you're not an expert, but so long as you are willing to learn—F'r instance, I didn't know I could drive a car. You find out by experiment. Now what in——"

An explosion like a rifle shot drowned Redmayne's voice. The car swerved from the trail, dead grass cracked about the wheels, and Jim was flung against the door. The shock cut his breath, and when she lurched the other way he fell against Redmayne and knocked him from the wheel. For a few moments that was all he knew ; and then he found the car had stopped and he was sitting on the running-board. Redmayne stood in the grass and swore, mechanically and without passion, as a frontiersman swears. Torn

rubber and canvas draped the near front wheel's rim. Jim noted that one could see the wreck.

"I knew she hit something good and hard," Redmayne remarked.

"It felt as if she hit a number of things," said Jim. "Do you know how a spare wheel is put on?"

"We are going to find out. The two University kids pulled down the engine and I guess we can fix a wheel. There's a jack and a spanner brace in the box. Let's get to it."

Jim did not know if Redmayne was logical. He argued like a plainsman; all one can do another, if forced, can do. At all events, a plainsman, as a rule, did not hesitate to try.

Dawn was but breaking, their hands and the tools were soon wet and slippery with dew, but they lifted the axle and pulled off the wheel. Jim tore some skin from his knuckles and the blood and dew were greasy on the spanner. He sweated, and for a few moments he and Redmayne violently disputed, but by and by the damaged rim was in the grass, and they humoured the other into its place. When all was fast and they got up the dark was gone. The morning was fresh and the spacious plain rolled back like a quiet sea to the faint streak of green and pink where the sun would rise. Jim pulled out his watch.

"The off-side driver tyre is not first class, but we must risk a crash. We have got to make the depôt soon. Shove her along."

"We are going to make the depôt," Redmayne replied.

Tossing torn grass and damp dust, the car took the trail, and Jim watched a little lonely butte rise on the horizon. When they passed the butte they ought to see the telegraph poles, but time was going and the wheel had delayed them. He had not changed a wheel before, and Redmayne could not properly drive a car,

but unless the engine crashed, Jim imagined they would reach the station in useful time. Their excursion was typical of the North-West, where experts were not yet numerous and one hooked on to any old job. Yet Jim's torn knuckles indicated that a beginner must pay for his apprenticeship.

To bore for coal was a fresh stunt, and expensive when the coal was not there. The reward for the risk had vanished, and all Jim hoped for was that to some extent he might cut his loss. He and Redmayne were frontiersmen. They knew nothing about the laws regulating joint-stock companies, and it looked as if the fellow who had got their money was cunning and unscrupulous. For all that, if he was yet at Vancouver, they must force him to account for his stewardship. When one had fought and conquered parching drought and Arctic blizzards, one must not be baffled by a soft-fleshed city crook.

Jim looked in front. Although the trail was broken, the engine pulled nobly, and the butte he watched leaped up. He saw the thin trees on its south slope, and then a faint sooty smear stained the bright horizon. On the high plains, one can see a locomotive's smoke while the train is yet a long distance off, and he touched Redmayne.

"Let her go! The engineer will stop for some minutes at the water-tank."

The rocking car went faster. The dust the rising sun had dried streamed back. In front, the curving brown trail heaved and reeled, and a grain elevator's top, a church tower, and low roofs pushed up from the plain. Sometimes for a few moments Jim watched them grow in size and distinctness, but for the most part his eyes were fixed on the advancing plume of smoke. Explosive eruptions began to mark its front; farther back, the sooty cloud curved down across twinkling glass.

"She's not yet on the bridge," said Redmayne.
"We are going to make it."

For five or six minutes Jim doubted. The roofs now cut his view, but by and by a bell tolled and the smoke tossed behind the row. It spouted up, opened at the top like a mushroom, and vanished. One might yet allow for five minutes at the water-tank, and Jim mechanically beat the cushion as if he forced the car along.

A little frame house sped by. On the other side, he saw a row, with verandas enclosed by mosquito gauze. They were in the settlement, and the car lurched along a wheel-torn street at right angles to the track. A small wooden church, its tower pierced by a large round hole, occupied a corner block, a board announced that another building was a Y.M.C.A., and then a man pushed back the doors of a workshop with a road-service sign. Redmayne blew his horn and signed the man to the station. A locomotive pump throbbed noisily, and the car plunged round a corner. The pump stopped and the car stopped. Jim fell against the screen, and the station agent signalled the conductor.

"Hold her a moment," he shouted and turned to Jim. "Calgary? Here's your ticket."

Jim pushed Redmayne across a side track, and they climbed the steps. The bell clanged and the wheels began to roll.

IV

BROKE

AT Calgary Jim was forced to wait for the Pacific express, and he felt the time he spent there long. While he loafed about the hot streets he pictured the drillers laboriously pushing across the plain to send their telegram. Before they reached the settlement where the farm telephones began he would be across the Rockies, but the Kicking Horse Pass was six hundred miles from the coast.

Yet after the quiet plains, the city interested Jim. His father had talked about the forlorn settlement he knew when he first arrived ; shiplap saloons and shacks, and the Royal North-West's guard-room. Calgary had now sixty thousand people, towering office blocks, flour mills, tanneries, and a university. Jim saw well-built churches and the attractive homes of sober, industrious folk. When he leaned against the parapet of the noble bridge he reflected that in Canada, the Wild West legend was a sort of Homeric tale about things long done with, and which perhaps had never been.

The Pacific express was altogether up-to-date. A gigantic locomotive hauled the dusty, flat-sided Pullmans, saloons, baggage and mail cars, colonists, and the open observation car. When Jim sat down in his smoking compartment, the mountain Moghul, snorting explosively, picked up her load, and took the climb to the Kicking Horse with a smooth, swinging stride.

By Banff and Golden she plunged, roaring, down the Rockies' defiles, and when Jim saw the hotels on the mountain-side he frowned. A Canadian does not refuse useful dollars, but the tourists' palaces were exotic. Canada's genius was industrial; she advanced by labour and he would sooner see the reeking smelters in the Selkirks, and the Kamloops railroad shops. Although he but used the shovel on an ore dump, a man engaged at his proper job had dignity, but somehow the loafing tourists vulgarized all they touched. Anyhow, Jim himself must live by labour, and at the next stop he bought the *Colonist* from the train-boy. The editors had used some caution, but he imagined they knew the boom was breaking, and although the crash was not yet, prices dropped at the Boards of Trade. By and by he gave Redmayne the newspaper.

"First-class mining stock is down. Ours, of course, is the wild-cat variety in which respectable brokers do not deal."

"All the same, a week or two since, stuff like that was unloaded in every hotel rotunda," Redmayne remarked. "Talk about trustful fools! *Hopeful* is the word. Before the bottom dropped out, the buyers hoped to find some bigger fools, and maybe they did."

For a few minutes he studied the newspaper, and then resumed: "We *are* a hopeful lot. I've seen two booms, but I've got stung again. She's going, Jim. The boosters will hold her up as long as possible while they try to crawl from under; the last to get out pays for the crowd. Well, I'll be pleased to meet Mr. Frensham, and in the meantime, I think I'll take a sleep."

He threw the *Colonist* on the seat, and was soon asleep. Jim went through the train to the observation car. His plans were vague, he durst not cogitate, and to watch the majestic landscape roll by was some relief. Until dusk fell, he spent the most part of the time on the platform behind the rocking car.

He had seen pictures of Norway and Switzerland. They had in British Columbia mountains like the Matterhorn and rivers nobler than the Rhone, but there were no pines in Scandinavia like the giant trees that grow by the waters of the Canadian Pacific slope. From the track where the smell of soft coal and creosote reeked, he saw timber he thought the lumberman would never reach. He saw angry rivers leap down tremendous chasms, deep-sunk valleys about which quiet waters looped, green lakes ; and then again the snow-planed rocks and shining glaciers. The train plunged into snowsheds, curved along the front of precipices, and swooped again to dusky woods.

The speeding landscape's beauty was austere and of the North. One noted the marks of savage storms and the scars that plunging rocks had cut. A stark country, roughly hewn by frost and flood, and the men who smoothed and finished Nature's job must be stern. Canada had got the men. When the boom was over, one could engage them by scores at the wharfsides and the cheap hotels ; fellows who could drop a two-hundred-foot fir just where she ought to go, fellows who could underpin a road along a canyon's beetling side. Staunch, useful stuff, waiting to get to work. For all the wild-cat boosters, Canada lived by honest sweat and strain, and sometimes her financiers sowed where they scarcely hoped to reap. When they built the Canadian Pacific, all knew the famous road for long could not pay.

Jim smiled, and knocked out his pipe. He was not going to Ottawa to put the crooked straight. He imagined he would soon go broke, but if the politicians properly knew their job, the fellows who framed the ramps and booms would go to jail. He might not have thought about it but that he himself was stung.

In spite of the suspense, he slept serenely in his rocking berth. When one's habit is to be usefully

occupied for twelve hours every day, one's sleep is tranquil, and now Jim knew he must front a crisis, somehow he was calm.

At length, he saw water shine behind noble trees ; and then the pines rolled back and the broad Inlet sparkled in the sun. On the north side, mountains sloped to the water and a ferry steamer's smoke stained the sky. In front, were the masts and funnels of anchored ships, sawmill stacks, high office blocks, and massed roofs on a hill. Then fresh trees cut Jim's view, and the train, swinging along the waterside, rolled behind lumber piles. The cars slowed, a bell clanged, and they were in the station by Vancouver wharf.

When the wheels stopped he jumped from the steps and went to the information bureau, where he ascertained that the train for Whatcom and Washington State did not go for some time. A few minutes afterwards, he and Redmayne pushed back the revolving doors of a large and ambitious second-class hotel. By comparison with the cost of rent and labour, Canadian second-class hotels are cheap, and as a rule the rotunda is used for a public rendezvous and the transaction of such business as is not encouraged at the Board of Trade.

Jim looked about. The large, bleak hall was not for the moment much occupied. A few second-class gentlemen studied the newspapers ; Jim knew their predatory type and imagined their business was to sell strangers wild-cat stock. A group at a table consulted about some documents ; another lot disputed noisily. Jim did not see Frensham, and he went to the desk where the clerk studied the angry group with sardonic humour. As a rule a Western hotel clerk knows as much about the city's half-world as a police inspector knows.

"Mr. Frensham was stopping here," said Jim.
"Has he given up his room?"

"He has not," the other replied.

"Then perhaps you can tell me where he is?"

"I can tell you where he went. After breakfast he started for Westminster."

New Westminster is but a few miles from Vancouver, and Jim cogitated. At a hotel of this sort, dinner is served soon after noon and the dining-room is not long kept open. If one arrives late, one must go without. The time was a few minutes after twelve o'clock, but Frensham had not returned.

"It's awkward. We must find him soon," he remarked.

The clerk said nothing. His glance somehow implied that he was amused. Since he, no doubt, knew it did so, Jim wondered whether he was willing to indicate that others were anxious to meet Mr. Frensham.

"D'you happen to know if he got a wire from Calgary?" Redmayne inquired. "I expect you sort out the telegrams and mail."

"Mr. Frensham got six or seven telegrams. The envelopes don't state where they were sent."

Jim looked up. The reply was justified, but the other had informed them that Frensham had received a number of telegrams. The implication was, the clerk was not unfriendly, and had perhaps some grounds to dislike Frensham.

"Our business is urgent. I suppose Mr. Frensham has not moved his trunk?"

"It has nothing to do with me. He pays for his room," the clerk rejoined, and after a moment signed a bell-boy. "Monkhouse," he said.

The boy crossed the floor and a fat, red-faced man, smoking a large cigar, got up from the group at the table. Jim knew the fellow, who had gone to his ranch for dinner when he and the geologist were at the bore-hole. Monkhouse pushed back his large, black hat, and gave him a friendly smile.

“ Did you buy some of our stock from Frensham ? ” Redmayne inquired.

“ I did not,” said Monkhouse. “ Not on my life. What about it ? ”

“ Maybe you know where he is ? ”

“ I know he started for Westminster. So do some more ; Jake’s kind of in demand. Now I have some honest-to-goodness stock for sale, but nobody asks for me.”

On the whole Jim thought the other a good sort. He wondered how far he might give him his confidence ; but Monkhouse resumed :

“ Have you come to tell Jake you have bottomed on coal ? ”

“ Not at all,” said Jim. “ Our news is, the drill has broken and the cores she brought up indicate that we didn’t bore at the proper spot.”

“ Well, well ! ” said Monkhouse. “ That’s too bad. But I reckon the boys would wire Jake as soon as the boring stopped ? ”

“ The telephone’s at Maybury, where they relay your messages to the railroad,” Redmayne explained. “ The boys thought they’d start in the morning, and we fixed things so’s they’d go on foot. Our notion was, we’d get here as soon as possible after the telegram.”

Monkhouse nodded, as if he approved, and Jim knew where something must be risked.

“ I expect Frensham got the drillers’ telegram some time since. Anyhow, he’s not in the hotel. Do you think we might find him at the station, just before the Whatcom cars start ? ”

“ No,” said Monkhouse smiling, and pulled out his watch. “ You might try the *Queen Mab* for Port Townsend and Seattle, but you have to be quick. She’s billed to sail when the express arrives.”

Jim nodded his thanks and started for the door. Townsend was the nearest port to Vancouver on

American soil. Since the express stopped ten or fifteen minutes had gone, but to transfer passengers' baggage might occupy some time, and jostling the people on the sidewalk, he plunged along the street.

Behind the sheds on the wharf a bell tolled and smoke floated from a tall stack. At the end of the shed Jim saw two tiers of decks and a white steamer's bow. A gangway crashed, a whistle blew, and the bow slowly began to swing. He clenched his fists and sped across the wharf.

Now the shed no longer cut his view, he remarked a strip of green water between the forepart of the vessel and the stage. She was swinging out, but her after half was yet against the timbers, and a gangway in her side was open. The wheeled sliding stage, however, was down, and in a moment or two the gangway would be out of reach. Two wharf-hands advanced to turn Jim back, but he saw Frensham lean across the rails on the upper deck. The fellow knew him and waved an ironical salute.

The other's smile fired Jim's blood. The brute thought he'd soon be safe on American soil; he, so to speak, acknowledged himself a cheat and mocked his victim. Well, Jim hoped to satisfy the swine he was rash. He ought to reach the gangway; if he could but seize the scupper channel along its edge, and get his boot on a lap of the steamer's plates——

"Stop him! He'll go overboard," shouted a steamship officer.

"You can't make it. She's going ahead," a wharf-hand bawled.

Jim leaped the guard chains. The gangway was but two or three yards off. He could yet get there; anyhow, he could get his arms on the deck. He swung his body for the jump, and shocked against a wharf-hand, who got in front. They went down and rolled across the planks; Jim, in fact, rolled across the edge,

but as he slipped down he seized a chain, and the wharf-hand stubbornly held on to his coat. Another went to help, and they were not at all gentle when they pulled him up. Foam splashed between the wharf and the steamer's side, the long top deck foreshortened and Frensham at the rail waved his hand. His face was indistinct, but Jim thought he smiled. Fumbling in his wallet, he pulled out two or three dollar bills.

"I expect you meant well, boys, but I don't owe you much," he said. "I'd have put up twenty dollars if you had helped me get on board."

They let him go and Redmayne advanced.

"You beat me to the sheds by thirty yards," he said. "If I'd been nearer, you wouldn't have jumped those chains. Well, he's gone, and I expect our wad is gone."

"It's very possible," Jim agreed. "Our first business is to find out where we stand. Come on. I'm going to consult a lawyer my father knew."

Redmayne shook his head. "You are going to buy a hat. Perhaps you don't know the other went overboard? Then I begin to feel I want some lunch, and I guess the lawyer will be taking his."

Jim smiled, a bleak smile, and they went up town to look for a restaurant where the tariff was not high.

V

JIM TAKES A FRESH KNOCK

AT three o'clock in the afternoon, Jim occupied the end of a bench under the giant firs in Stanley Park. Redmayne, at the other end, moodily smoked his pipe. In the city, the streets were intolerably hot, and for all the electric fans, the restaurant swarmed with flies. Few cities perhaps have a pleasure ground as noble as Vancouver's park, and the civic authorities have been satisfied to cut smooth rides through the belt of primeval forest.

Opposite the bench, a shady avenue commanded the Narrows, and Jim saw sparkling water, seamed by a white tide-line, and the saw-edged top of the pine-woods on the other side. Then a clumsy, black cargo boat steamed across the picture the giant trunks and branches framed, and under her sooty smoke-cloud all got indistinct. Jim turned his head. Fifty yards off, a listless group lay in the little red wineberry bushes, and their uncouth poses indicated that two or three were asleep. The men's clothes were shabby, one's boots were broken, and Jim's glance got sympathetic. He imagined their occupation was to perambulate the city, looking for a job, and they now rested after the dreary round. The boom had not carried them to fortune, and now the tide had turned, the ebb might strand them and him on the shoals.

Redmayne, however, began to talk, and they moodily reviewed their consultation with the Hastings Street lawyer. Redmayne's first notion was that Frensham

might be stopped by the United States Immigration Bureau, particularly if the officers were warned by telegram that a defaulting, bunco-steering company promoter would try to land. The lawyer demurred. Statements of the sort were libellous and actionable; they must first be satisfied that Frensham was a defaulter. He might be an American citizen and entitled to land. Moreover, if he were Canadian, he had no doubt supplied himself with the necessary documents.

"Very well," said Redmayne. "What are we going to do about hauling the fellow back?"

The lawyer thought it might be awkward and expensive. In fact, he imagined Mr. Frensham was gone for good. However, if they gave him all particulars, he would see if he could state a case on which the Canadian police might ask for extradition. To begin with, he must inquire about the company's other officers. When Jim gave him some stock certificates and so forth, he smiled.

"I believe these gentlemen's names would not carry much weight at the Board of Trade. But do you know where they are?"

"We knew where they were," said Redmayne. "When we called them on the telephone, we found they had quit. I begin to think they are now in Washington state."

"It is very possible," the lawyer agreed.

For a few minutes he pondered, and then resumed. They must find out who had bought the shares, advertise for all who had claims against the company, call a meeting, and appoint an investigation committee. In the meantime Frensham's extradition must wait. The land transfer stood, and the blocks Jim and Redmayne had made over were, of course, the company's. With their authority, he would get to work, and as soon as possible would send them news.

Redmayne, on the bench in Stanley Park, summarized the lawyer's remarks.

"Frensham has got away with it. All the company now owns is a hole in the ground and some ranching land that was yours and mine. If we want the land, we must buy it back. If we cannot and the committee sells to another, we might get five or ten dollars for a wind-up dividend. To get rich by speculating is not as easy as some fools think."

Jim agreed, and when he had smoked his pipe, they went back to the town and bought tickets for the evening train at a Hastings agency.

Soon after Jim's return, he started for home one evening from a ranch two or three miles off. He had not yet gone to Garside's, as he felt he ought. Helen would be sympathetic, but Garside was an old-timer and he studied the new school with a sort of tolerant interest that was at times ironical. "You young fellas," was his favourite remark. Jim did not know if he himself was very much up to date, but he was young, and he would sooner his friends acclaimed his victory than pitied his defeat.

The sun was behind the mountains and dim peaks cut the melting green and red. Dew touched the grass, he smelt wild peppermint, and by and by in the evening calm heard the beat of a horse's feet. Where the ground rolled, a girl on horseback crossed the top of a rise. Jim would have known her much farther off and he unconsciously braced up. Helen knew all about the obstacles he must front, but when the boring began he had hoped she might acknowledge him a conqueror.

Stopping her horse a yard or two off, she gave him a kind look. Jim had thought she might get down, but she did not. Helen Garside was nothing of a prairie amazon, although she was tall and nobly built. Jim had not seen her in a fashionable drawing-room,

but he imagined she would carry herself with the calm distinction that marked her on the plains. He, however, did not know much about drawing-rooms, and when, at Toronto, he sometimes went to a social function, the young women he met embarrassed him. As a rule, they were rather frank than calm.

"I am sorry, Jim," she said. "We knew the drill had stopped and you went to Vancouver. But perhaps something can be saved?"

"The lawyer we saw is not hopeful," Jim replied. "Frensham carried off our money, and all we have got is a bore-hole in barren rock. Redmayne thinks he may be able to keep his ranch. I very much doubt if I can stay at mine."

Helen quietly studied him. He frowned and his mouth went tight. Jim's pluck was good, but he had got a knock and must take another. Since she was not at all a fool, she knew the ambitions that had urged him to bore. She had, in fact, discreetly tried to hint that the ambitions could not be carried out, but Jim, occupied by his ranch and his mining plans, was dull. Now she was moved to pity. He gave her a few particulars; and then she said:

"You have been back for seven or eight days, but you did not come across to the ranch. We rather expected you——"

The blood came to Jim's skin, but he smiled, an apologetic smile.

"Oh, well, one hates to acknowledge oneself beaten; and when your father tried to persuade me to leave the thing alone, I was obstinate. You tried, and I was puzzled, because I haven't known you refuse to take a dare."

"You were rather obstinate, Jim," Helen agreed. "I might perhaps have been firmer, because father did not trust Frensham, but the risk was yours, and after all we really did not know you would not find coal."

A number of people believed you might reach a good seam."

"You certainly implied that you didn't reckon on our doing so. Since you are never shabby, to find out you were justified will not be much satisfaction, but we got stung all right."

Helen had felt her explanation laboured. When Jim began to bore she had not wanted him, if he made good, to think himself cheated of his reward; and she was much less willing for him to imagine he paid for his failure. Yet he was dull, and the ground was awkward. One could not refuse to marry a man who had not asked one. It looked as if he were yet puzzled, but he soon must see a light, and she hated to see him hurt.

"I hoped you would come across, because we had some news we would sooner you first got from us," she said. "In the fall I am going to marry Stephen Moor."

The blood leaped to Jim's skin and his mouth set in a firm line. Then the colour drained from his face, but he smiled.

"Steve has all the luck. The queer thing is, I never thought— Anyhow, he is a good sort—"

"But he has not your talents?" said Helen, in a quiet voice,

"It begins to look as if my talents were not remarkable. Let's be frank; in fact, I think some frankness might have helped before. Well, since I know you and Mr. Garside, I know my recent crash has nothing to do with your engagement. You are, of course, entitled to marry whom you like; but, after all, for *Steve* to carry you off—"

Helen bent and stroked her impatient horse. Then she turned and fronted Jim.

"You do not use much tact. You think Steve is not my sort? For example, he's rather sober and safe

than clever? I know him steadfast. He is not rich. It is not important; his ranch is good and he goes quietly but firmly ahead. He is kind, and he is my lover."

"He is all you think," said Jim, with something of an effort. "The trouble is, I was your lover, and I believed you knew. I can't pretend I'm not hurt. For one thing, you'd know I cheated."

"Yes; you are rather obvious, Jim," Helen agreed, and although she smiled her smile was gentle. "I am not going to apologize for marrying Steve, but you wanted us to be frank. For long we were pals; better pals perhaps because at one time we fought, and I trusted you as I would trust nobody but father and Steve. Yet one does not marry one's pal."

Jim was not at all humorous, but he felt he must try to be as cool as Helen.

"The plan might have some advantages. Anyhow, you would know the worst about the other."

"Nothing I know about you would daunt a fastidious girl. The drawback was, I never really moved you," said Helen in a gentle voice. "I was a type, the sort of girl you approved. You must concentrate on your ranching, but by and by, when you could support a wife, and had time to think about it, you would ask me to marry you. In a way, of course, you were not selfish, and you were satisfied I'd agree. Well, I did not want a lover like that."

Jim said nothing. He wondered whether Helen exaggerated; her habit was not to do so. He was hurt and angry. He was entitled to be hurt, but perhaps his annoyance sprang from his beginning to see she might, to some extent, be justified.

"When you are really in love, you will not calculate," Helen resumed. "And you will not be content for the girl to imagine all you think about her. But we'll let it go. Steve is your friend, and I am yet, I

hope, your pal and confidant. You will come to my wedding, and we hope you will afterwards come to our house."

"You are kind," said Jim. "The wedding is in the fall? I might be gone."

Helen gave him a keen glance. She saw he pondered, and his look was resolute. His mood was not a mood on which one could work, but she carried a message.

"My father was your father's friend, and before you weigh any fresh plans he hopes you will come across and talk to him and Steve. You have parted with some land, but they have grass in the north valley they cannot just now use, and our stock of dry feed is large. Father was afraid you might be forced to sell your young steers before the proper time. You will come across and consult with him?"

"I have got some useful friends," said Jim, with a crooked smile. "Since you are entitled to marry Steve, and I dare say you have got the better man, I mustn't storm because you turned me down. For all that, I'm human, and now I have got entangled, I will not ask your father and husband to see me out."

"If you are obstinately independent, they will be hurt."

"The important thing is, I am hurt. When you are knocked out you don't think for others, and sometimes you're not polite. It's my apology. Steve for all his soberness is first-class stuff, and in the circumstances, I must try to be resigned."

"Resignation will be easier than you think," Helen remarked with a touch of humour. "You are obstinate, but obstinacy is useful, and you are not beaten. I believe we will yet see you win. But although we are not allowed to help, come across and talk about your plans."

She touched her horse and waved her hand. Jim lifted his hat, and standing firmly braced, watched her

melt into the dusk. It was done with, and Helen was gone. So far as he could find out, his money was gone. Well, there was no use in storming, and one must pay for one's folly.

In the meantime, he must get busy, and although he had started for home, he steered for his neighbour's ranch. Redmayne, on the veranda, fought the mosquitoes and studied a newspaper by a kerosene lamp.

"Did you know Helen Garside was going to marry Steve Moor?" Jim inquired.

Redmayne hesitated. "Well, I kind of suspicioned she might."

"Perhaps it's strange, but I did not," said Jim with dreary humour, and sitting down on the steps, lighted his pipe. "It accounts for my feeling I'm through with the North-West. Will you take my Power of Attorney, and, as far as possible, pay my debts? If a small sum is over, you know my bank. The agent and the lawyers will help you fix things."

"If I must, I will," said Redmayne. "I calculate I can hold on. But where are you going?"

"Not long since, one went West when one was broke; but when you make Victoria you must stop for the sea, and now the boom peters out, I expect British Columbia is crowded by gentlemen looking for a job. I'm going East—to the Old Country."

"You reckon to join your father's folk?"

Jim nodded. "When he died, his brother asked us to Goldsike. On the whole, a kind letter, but my mother would not go."

"Then, you have not met your uncle?"

"Sometimes my father talked about him. I imagine he's a queer old fellow and, so to speak, up against his other relations, which perhaps accounted for his wanting me. My father was the second son, his portion was a few hundred pounds, and he pulled out for Canada."

"John Railton was my pal and a white man, but he was not the sort of fellow I'd want to be up against," Redmayne remarked in a thoughtful voice. "If you own land in the Old Country, you're—what d'you call them—gentlefolk? Well, you sure don't act and talk like the Englishmen who loaf about the Banff hotels. I'd say you're a hundred-per-cent Canadian."

Jim laughed. "I'm fifty-fifty, and perhaps it's important. I believe the Railtons are not an easy lot, and although the land is my uncle's, and as a rule English farmers are but rent-paying tenants, he is not rich. The Goldsike farm runs across rocks and muskegs in some bleak hills. That's all I really know."

"You think his proposition stands?"

"In the morning I start for the railroad, to send a cablegram. Then I must wait for his reply."

Redmayne nodded, and they began to talk about Jim's debts to the storekeepers and the sum he ought to get for his cattle at Medicine Hat.

VI

THE EASTERN TRAIL

JIM, at the railroad settlement, rested his back against the station-agent's office and stretched his legs across the dusty boards. A plainsman is not fastidious about his clothes, and Jim's were old brown overalls. The faded colour harmonized with his skin and the parched grass that bordered the track.

The spot was in the shade and he occupied himself with a railroad folder and a steamship advertisement map. Greenwich was longitude zero, Halifax, N.S. 64, and Calgary 115, West. The world span towards the rising sun and one knew its speed; but since Kamloops, across the Rockies, was nearly as far west of Halifax as Halifax was west of Greenwich, he might check up his calculations by the difference between Mountain and Atlantic time. Jim's bothering to do so was typical.

Anyhow, Goldsike was back in some lonely hills, Jim did not know when his message had arrived, and James Railton would not get up before the usual hour in order to telegraph. Jim must wait for dinner at the hotel where he had stopped for the night; he must, perhaps, wait for supper, and he looked about.

The settlement fronted the railroad, all on one side. At the south end, behind the big water tank, the white-washed rails of the stockyard bordered the line. Then one saw a rather ambitious hotel, with a veranda along the front, a road-service house and an implement yard, where the old-time livery not long since was. Two

stores, up five or six steps, adjoined the yard ; the pool room was on the board sidewalk ; and then eight or nine small frame houses, set back in garden lots, carried on the row. Their verandas were enclosed by mosquito gauze, and unless one used some caution, the skeleton spring doors hit one's back. At the end was a Methodist church, and behind it shining fruit and meat cans marked the rubbish dump.

The hot and dusty settlement was not at all romantic, and, on the whole, the settlers were a soberly laborious lot. Now and then cowboys drove plunging, long-horned steers into the railroad yard, but none carried a pistol, and if somebody at the pool room used his fists, he risked being looked up by the mounted police.

Jim smiled. The West was sternly utilitarian, and from an economical point of view, he had not made good. His youth was spent in study and labour, and his one romantic exploit had cost him his ranch. Then he had lost the girl he had hoped to marry. Yet, since one ought to be accurate, he admitted that Helen was never his.

Behind the low roofs, the plain rolled back, open and unfenced, to the vague, grey foothills. In the foreground, the grass was burned to grey and ochre by the sun ; farther off, it melted in long, blue waves. A spacious country where the rushing north-west winds fired one's blood. Jim had loved it.

For all that, he was going, and he was keen to start. A broken man must go where he could find a useful job, and one might as well steer east as west. Anyhow, he refused to stop where he must meet Helen and her husband. Besides, although he thought it strange, something called him East. He had begun to hope James Railton yet wanted him to come across.

For some time he smoked and brooded, and he perhaps slept, for when he looked up with a jerk, the

sun had moved round the shack, and the operator was at the door.

"You can wake up, Railton. Your wire's come through," he said.

When Jim tore the envelope his hand was firm, but he admitted a queer suspense. Then his keenest emotion was something like relief.

"Expect you soon. Draft for expenses at B.N.A., Montreal."

The old fellow was kind. Moreover, he was practical; Jim, picturing his father, imagined the Railtons a practical lot. Well, he did not want his uncle's money; he wanted an occupation, but he must get busy. Following the operator into the office, he asked for a telegraph form and wrote:

"Thanks. Megantic twenty-first."

Ten minutes afterwards he got on his horse and took the trail. There was no use in his waiting for food at the hotel. Speed was important, and if he pushed ahead, he would get supper at a farm he knew. He had but fourteen days and much must be done. Now all was fixed, the time to brood was past. He must get action and look steadfastly in front.

On the evening after his return he undertook a task from which he shrank. He must tell Mike he did not need him, and the fellow was for long his father's trusted servant. A useful man; obstinate with a sort of clever obstinacy you did not at first remark, but stanch. Although Mike might pretend he indulged you, he took the line he liked, and you found out afterwards that the line was right. Sometimes Jim had wondered who was really boss.

The evening was calm and hot, and while the sunset melted behind the hill-tops they sat on the veranda steps. Jim now and then beat off the mosquitoes. Mike serenely smoked his pipe, but he noted his employer's knitted brows and his revengeful satisfaction

when his aim was good. The young fellow had something on his mind.

"I'm sorry, old-timer, but I cannot keep you," Jim at length remarked. "I hope you'll stop and help Redmayne move the stock to the sales yard. On the twenty-first I start for England. I have got to go."

"Sure," said Mike, "it's thransparent, but maybe plain is the word. The thransparent thing is the thing ye see through. I would not say Canadians are honest-ter than other folk, but ye know what they want, and ye do not expect them to be delikit. In Canada, if ye do not like a man, ye hit him with a club."

Jim smiled. Mike's idiom was mixed, for sometimes he used good Canadian, although Jim imagined he reasoned in Irish, and perhaps in consequence, one did not altogether see where he led. All the same, his habit was to lead you there.

"If it's some comfort, I hate to let you go."

"Well, well," said Mike, "you are joining up with your English relation. A sheep-run in the limestone hills, and maybe some blue-grey cattle in the dale? Ye would not think an Englishman fanciful, but he calls his cattle blue-grey because they're black and white, and they get the black from the Angus sthrain. An Angus is a grand beast, and when you're on limestone the grass is sweet."

Jim was puzzled. He had not talked about Goldsike to Mike, and he imagined his father had not done so.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"Short and straight! Ye're English and Canadian," Mike remarked. "When I was young and enterprising, I went across from Derry to make hay in Lancashire. Then I went North to the limestone moors and I stopped twelve months. A cold, dark country. The men are big and steady workers, but not ingenious. I might have stopped longer but for a girl."

Mike was not a looker. Jim had not thought him

romantic, although he had a seductive tongue. The other perhaps saw his interest, for he smiled.

"An' why would I stop? Were there not girls by Errigal? And she promised to the masther's son."

"We must get things fixed," said Jim. "I must pull out on the sixteenth. Until the month is up, you will help Redmayne?"

"I will not. When you start for the Old Country, I'm going with you."

Jim frowned. He must not hurt the fellow, but he must refuse to be hustled, and he had known Mike conquer by a surprise attack.

"The trouble is, I am but my uncle's servant, and he might not want another."

Mike tranquilly knocked out and reloaded his pipe. Jim wondered whether he was resigned or if he planned a fresh surprise.

"Twenty years I was with your father, and four with you. The pay was good and regular, and now I'll take my rest like a gentleman. At the back of Derryveagh, a cothouse and a goose green does not cost ye much, and I know the wan I want, where the glenfoot opens to the sands. Silver sands, in among the rocks, and at night when ye're not sleeping, ye hear the Atlantic rollers churn. The white street's across the river, and the sea trout lie in the pools. Errigal stands behind, and in spring the snipe are bleating on the mountains. A serene and quiate spot for a lonesome man."

"Were you married, Mike?" Jim inquired.

"I was promised," Mike replied in a brooding voice. "Poor we were and industhrious. In Canada, yes are poor when yes will not work; in the Old Country, at wan time, ye might take a job and starve— She's under the sod. They sweated the flesh from the bones of her in the Laggan mills; and I'm getting old. For her sake, I carried the coal-oil, the day we meant to roast the R.I.C. in black Belfast."

"Who are the R.I.C.?"

"The boys had some other names for them, but their proper title was the Rile Irish Constabulary. They did not trust them with horses, like the Royal North-West, and their uniform was black. Now they're gone, and all is free and independent. Ye can net a pool for the white trout and shoot a snipe when ye like. Free and independent! And me herding Canadian steers in the glorious Easter Week!"

"You are a queer lot," Jim remarked. "I don't know if you will think the Free State an easier boss. However, if you are resolved to go, you will soon find out."

They started on the sixteenth, on board a second-class car. Jim knew the road to the East, but as the spacious landscape rolled past the windows he thought the homesteads more numerous and saw the towns by the track got larger fast. Followed by swift clouds, the cars sped down from the foothills to the high and windy plains of Saskatchewan, and across the Manitoba flats. At Regina, the dry, cattle country was done with; at Winnipeg the wheat belt was behind them, and they plunged into the tangled woods that roll across the Laurentian rocks.

When the liner hauled out of dock at Montreal, day was breaking; when she signalled her passengers at Quebec dusk had begun to fall. For ten minutes the engines stopped, and Jim, on the high boat-deck, saw the lights of the climbing city twinkle against the steep rock's front. Above all, a constellation marked the tourists' ambitious hotel. Then the deep propellers throbbed, Quebec melted, and the ship forged down river in the dark. Jim leaned against the rails and thoughtfully lighted his pipe.

Liverpool was the next stop and when he landed he must use rules he did not know. He wondered whether he would ever go back. In Canada he had lost all he

loved, and he had paid, in full, for his rashness. Well, the world was the broken man's inheritance, and in the Old Country his luck might turn. Anyhow, the proper line was to look in front and set one's mouth.

The adventure began propitiously. The sun shone on Belle Isle Strait, and they threaded the Greenland ice in tranquil weather. All the way to Tory light, the long heave gently splashed the liner's bows. At dawn they saw the cliffs of Donegal; when night fell they were at Liverpool. Mike found he could get a Belfast boat, and Jim waited for morning.

Exchange station had not, like the depôt at Winnipeg, a spacious, marble-floored waiting-room and good pictures, and he thought the cars and locomotives ridiculously small; but the little train ran smoothly and much faster than the C.P.R. express. Bleak warehouses, shabby streets, automobile roads, and rows of new, red houses flashed by. He could not read the stations' names, and the people on the high platforms were indistinct, yet all the noise the cars made was a gentle, soothing rhythm. When a Canadian engineer let his locomotive go, one heard her triumphant snorting five or six miles off.

At length, for ten or fifteen minutes, they were in the fields; little fields with sooty hedges and sometimes fences of old coal-pit rope, but when Jim saw the wheat he pushed down the glass in the queer side corridor. Fifty bushels to the acre, and perhaps then some! In Massachusetts, twenty bushels was a bonanza crop, and in the American Middle-West one was satisfied with fifteen. Yet, when Australia feared a yellow invasion and Canada was being peopled by foreigners, Old Country folks defiled with mean new houses these rich English fields.

Coal-pit winding towers and refuse dumps cut his view; forge hammers pounded behind plumes of steam, sooty cotton mills rolled by, and they plunged

into the smoke of another town. For two minutes they stopped at the depôt, a dark and sooty cave, and Jim pictured the noble station on St. James', Montreal. Yet the little train pulled out exactly on time, and as a rule in the West nobody knew when a train might start.

Jim saw more fields, dotted by cotton mills and factories, and cut by street-car lines. Motor buses crowded the black roads; where a few trees, an old church and a limewashed inn for a moment or two banished the landscape's ugliness, somebody had put up a tin garage and a yellow gasoline pump. Jim pulled out his watch and the time bill. The little train was making fifty miles an hour, but ahead was another town. England a garden? If all was like industrial Lancashire, he was going back.

The cars swung across a bridge under which a river, stained by dyeworks, ran, and when they took the curve Jim glanced up the valley. In the North-East, lofty, round-topped moors cut the sky. He began to hope the coal-pits and the mills did not go on for ever.

By and by he got down at a station on the moors' high slopes and waited for another train. In the South-West, the sky was stained by smoke; when he looked North, the track curved across brown heather and white, bent grass. A keen wind blew down the moor, a misty shower dimmed the sun, and he smelt peat; but wheels roiled in a cutting and his train arrived, one and a half minutes ~~ear~~ ^{over} her schedule time. In Alberta he had waited ~~for~~ ^{for} a day.

VII

GOLDSIKE

IN the afternoon Jim got down at a market town at the bottom of a green valley. A clear, noisy river looped about the fields under noble trees, and an old red church dominated the quiet streets. In the background, the Pennine moors rolled north. Although the sun shone, thin rain damped the stones. Jim remarked the misty light was yellow and the hills very blue.

Nobody at the station seemed to look out for him and he went down the hill to the *Hollybush* Inn. A motor-bus cut his view up the narrow street; the driver, sitting on the steps, smoked a cigarette. Across the square, a car was backed against a grocery warehouse door, and two men put a sack on board. That was all. Jim heard the river and the church clock's mellow note.

He crossed the square, and one of the men looked up and pushed a needle into the sack. He was a large young fellow and had not a coat. A quantity of yellow dust stuck to his clothes.

"You are Mr. Railton, from Montreal?"

"I am," said Jim. "Anyhow, Montreal was the spot where I joined the ship."

"Then, I engaged to meet you, and if we had not burst the sack, I'd have been at the station. Cotton-seed meal is messy stuff and not cheap. However, I am Wat Hodson, of The Nook. The dalesmen call me Hodgin and my farm the Neeyook."

Jim thought the fellow friendly and he gave him his hand.

"I begin to like your English beer. Perhaps you'll join me?"

They went to the *Hollybush*, and Jim remarked that the fat landlord himself supplied them with two large glasses. Hodson drained his with a practised ease Jim could not imitate, but refused some more.

"The post-war stuff is harmless, but we must take the road," he said. "It might have been fine at the dalehead, and before the dew falls I'd like to sweep up some hay."

"It's a cliver lad as can gan up Swindale and come doon wi'out getting wet," the landlord remarked.

A few moments since Jim had thought the fellow's English good, but Hodson laughed.

"He's quoting, Mr. Railton. The proverb is generally applied to a rather damp, tourists' haunt. In Cumberland, the trouble is to start dry, particularly if you start from the *Hollybush*."

They went down the steps and Jim inquired if Hodson's haymaking was not late, and since he had talked about *sweeping*, did he not use a horse-rake.

"In the dales, you make hay when it's possible, and with a sort of jointed hurdle pull the grass on to a sledge or a bogie truck," the other replied. "However, you will soon be able to study the operation."

When they reached the car he signed Jim to get up in front. The back was smeared by yellow meal and two rolls of barbed wire occupied the floor. The warehouseman pushed a needle and thread into the mended sack.

"She'll likely hold, but you niver know, and you might cwope t' lot on Swinset bank."

Hodson started the engine and remarked to Jim: "Thoo niver knows is the dalesman's motto; we are

cautious folk. You have perhaps used a car of this make before ? ”

“ I believe they’re ubiquitous and nearly foolproof,” Jim replied. “ My last ride on board one was a race in the dark for the railroad, and the man who steered me admitted he could not drive.”

“ Oh, well, I am not an expert, and when you are carrying sixteen stone of meal and two hundredweight of wire, Swinset bank is awkward. I have known a car run back and cwope.”

“ Capsize ? ” said Jim. “ How d’you write it ? ”

“ In Scotland, coup. Where O follows C, we push in a W—for example, cwoals—but sometimes where we begin with a long O or A we shorten them with Y. An oak is a yak, but a yakker is a quantity of land. However, I have met North-American words that baffled me.”

“ In the West, one or two are good Castilian ; some they use back East are Elizabethan. I dare say the Plymouth Pilgrims carried them across.”

“ Ours came over with King Canute,” Hodson remarked. “ But I’ve got to shift the gear, and she mustn’t miss.”

Jim approved his caution. The little town was now below them, the gears engaged with an alarming noise, and the hill in front looked precipitous. They crawled up, and at the top sped down to a valley where a small angry river brawled among big stones. For a time, noble oaks, beeches, and ash-trees spread their branches across the road, and Jim looked out, as if from a dark arch, at the sunshine on the fells. He saw shining threads of water and black ravines in the peat ; yellow bent-grass and luminous, green, mossy belts ; and then a sparkling shower touched the picture and the strong colours melted.

The trees rolled back. Short mountain-ashes and hazels bordered the road. The berries were going

red; the milky nuts were green and white. A moor sloped to the river and pale yellow splashed the fern. The hills in front were higher, and when sunshine swept their sides the light touched glimmering limestone crags. By and by a beck crossed the road, and on the other side floods had strewn the daunting pitch with stones.

"Swinset bank," said Hodson. "I expect she'll climb it, but I've known her refuse."

Jim allowed him to concentrate on his driving, and they took the water-splash. Foam and gravel leaped about the wheels, worn gears clanged, and the engine laboured. On one side, grass, cropped like a lawn by rabbits, dropped nearly straight to the river. Jim imagined, if he were forced, he could throw out the wire and jump overboard, but in the meantime they were going up.

They got up, and at the top Hodson stopped his engine on a level flat by a larch wood.

"She knocked rather nastily, and I expect she's hot," he said. "Anyhow, I'll pull off the cover. You might like to stretch your legs, and the church at the end of the wood is old——"

Jim imagined Hodson would sooner experiment with his engine when nobody was about, and he followed the road to a gate in a mossy wall. Ancient yews and hollies shadowed the little church. He noted the house-leek on the flagged roof and the dog's-tooth moulding round the crumbling arch at the door. When Columbus landed in the West Indies the dog's-tooth was long out of date; yet, but for two stained windows, it did not look as if the church were renovated.

He glanced up the dale. A mile off, he saw two white farmsteads. A faint wind touched the larches, and the river throbbed on a drowsy, trembling note. That was all. In Canada one built a church where

people were. The sun was on the fell slopes, but the high tops were misty blue. All was misty and elusive. If one shouted, Jim felt the picture might vanish.

He turned his head, and a circle-cross war memorial fixed his glance. Although the spot was lonely, the roll of names was long, and he moved quietly through the long grass. The boys were buried by Somme and Euphrates, but if they were Hodgin's sort, Jim reckoned Fritz and his Turkish pals had something of a job. Hodgin? His thinking like that was queer. A queerer thing was, the calm hills were not altogether strange. Then he saw a verse cut in the stone.

"We shall pass in summer weather.
We shall come home at eventide
Where the fells stand up together
And all quiet things abide——"

They had not come home; it looked as if they were gone for good. Big drops splashed the yew trees, and limestone crags and black ravines vanished like a dream. A dim rainbow spanned the dale. After all, one never knew. Jim lifted his hat and started for the gate.

Hodson picked him up. The road went downhill to the river. A turnip field followed the loose stone wall and the noise of the rain on the blue-green leaves was like the roll of drums. The shower passed and sunshine sped across tasselled oats. Since they had climbed into the hills, Jim noted with some surprise that the corn grew tall and strong. Corn? In North America maize was corn, but his brain had mechanically used the English word.

"The crop is good," he said.

"Better than you thought?" said Hodson. "Cumberland oats are famous, but they get heavier crops on the seaboard plain. As a rule, harvest bothers us. To dry the stooks is awkward."

somehow fixed, like Jim's. Signing the young fellow to advance, he gave him his hand.

"I would sooner not get up. You have your father's look, but you are not altogether one of us. I don't know if it is a drawback. For long we have married daleswomen and the stock gets old."

"Sometimes I feel my youth, sir," said Jim. "I hope you are not ill."

"I was better before I went down the beck, when we were moving sheep from a flooded pasture one stormy evening," Railton replied. "Sciatica is intermittent, but after my cold plunge, it rather comes than goes."

He inquired about Jim's voyage, and then, stating that supper would soon be served, sent him to his room. The stairs cracked; Jim saw the rail was dark, worm-eaten oak, and at the middle of the passage behind the landing he went up two steps. When one entered the dining-room, he remembered, one went down two steps. Then the passage was not altogether straight. It looked as if the old fellows who built Goldsike hated uniformity.

His room was large. Two or three sheepskin rugs dotted the dark floor; the bed was a four-poster, and the blankets were the sort of blankets one used in the North-West after the snow fell. Yet it was now summer in the English hills. The grate, lifted two feet from the hearthstone, went right across a yawning hole in the wall; a swivel looking-glass, fixed upright by a pin-cushion, occupied the top of a mahogany chest-of-drawers he doubted if one could move. If one wanted a light, one used the candle in the tall brass stick.

Jim went to the narrow window and pushed back the hinged frame. Mist floated across the hill-side and a long row of sheep moved up into the haze. A dog barked and lambs bleated. At the top of the dark

ravine, battered firs loomed like ghosts of trees. Jim heard the beck throb, he smelt peat smoke and wet hay. When he leaned out across the ledge, he felt a cool damp touch on his skin. Goldsike was not at all like the homesteads he knew in Canada, but it was not foreign. There was the strange thing. He had thought himself Canadian, but in the dark hills he was not a foreigner.

VIII

DALESFOLK

JIM'S supper was served on north-country oak, dark from age and polished by long use. He approved the small pink-spotted trout, mutton ham, and the pasty of wild raspberries. Strong tea was his drink in Canada; the Goldsike tea was China tea and better than the brew he got at Liverpool. He thought the bowl in which a few red roses bloomed, first-class stuff. At Goldsike nothing was vulgar and nothing was up to date, but Jim imagined the Railtons had used old furniture and so forth because it was useful, and not because it was old. In a way, the house was bleak. Yet, for proper occupants, it was home-like.

Railton and his house harmonized. He refused to claim an invalid's indulgence, and sitting rather awkwardly braced at the end of the table, he was a polite host. A hard man, perhaps; anyhow, one knew him firm, but Jim thought he might be trusted by all who did not cheat.

When supper was over Railton went back to his easy chair by the fireplace. An ash block snapped and flamed among the crumbling peat, and in the gloomy evening the red glow was cheerful. An aromatic smell stole about the room, and sometimes bright reflections touched the panels that went half-way up the wall. On the upper half were pictures in old-gold frames; a group of belted cattle and a Clydesdale horse.

Jim, by Railton's order, narrated his life in the foothills, his fight to carry on the ranch, and his mining experiment. The old fellow's questions were shrewd, and Jim imagined he weighed him when he pondered his replies.

"You were, of course, exploited, but I expect you inherited your rashness, and some other qualities," he remarked. "Your grandfather reopened an old tunnel, and mining cost him much."

"It cost me all I'd got," said Jim.

"You imply that my luck was better? Well, for one thing, I was warned and I left the mine alone. Then, in some circumstances, sheep-farming pays, although something depends on the sheep-run and much on the farmer; but Goldsike was not altogether supported by the profits on the flock. In the old days, before the railway crossed Shap fells, Cumberland money went to build ships of Cumberland oak, and our savings helped to launch two now famous Liverpool steamship lines—— However, it is not important. Did your father tell you much about your English relations?"

"He talked about you with kindness, sir. I think that was all."

Railton nodded, as if he understood.

"Well, you ought perhaps to know—My father married twice. His second wife was not our sort. Her folk were fashionable, and she herself had some charm; a shallow, greedy woman who must be indulged, but until her children grew up, not unkind. Then the fight began, and a jealous woman is an awkward antagonist. For all that, one must be just—the boy was slack but likeable; his sister, my half-sister, was hard and unscrupulous. I think her ambitions went farther than her mother's.

"Goldsike is not entailed; the oldest son inherits by his father's will. Your grandfather refused to

break the tradition ; but I yet believe John got a smaller sum than he was entitled to when he went to Canada. I held on. Since I was the oldest, Goldsike was mine, and when the old man got infirm, I think he was glad for me to be about. My stepmother worked on him to alter his will. She claimed a fresh will was drafted. It was, at all events, not executed.

"Her portion was just, and I was not generous. She had brought us nothing and she banished your father. In fact, for some time I was bothered to put all straight. She and her son are long since dead, but her daughter married and taught her children to believe I cheated, and the bottom land by the beck was properly theirs."

"The pasture in the valley is good," Jim remarked. "If the plough land on the rising ground goes with it, the block would feed some cattle. Then I saw an old steading."

Railton nodded. "Arable and grass are balanced, and feed my cattle. At one time Low Scale was a separate farm ; it might be cut off from Goldsike and sold for a useful sum. When Kate, my half-sister, died, her lawyer husband claimed it for her children. Ethically, Low Scale was theirs, he said. The old man had meant it to be Kate's and Frank's, and she was the survivor."

"He was perhaps entitled to argue like that," said Jim.

"It was plausible ; Firth is plausible," Railton agreed. "I, however, knew my antagonist, and my reply was, I carried out my father's executed will. A draft was perhaps drawn for his approval ; my stepmother had hoped to persuade him, but we had no evidence that he did approve. Moreover, to pay the portion she had got had for long embarrassed me. I would not cut up Goldsike. The

land was Railtons' land. Your father was yet alive, Jim."

Jim said nothing. He thought the old fellow's habit was to hold all that was his. To persuade him might be awkward, and he was not the sort one could bully. Rain splashed the glass, and although it was but eight o'clock on a summer evening, the room got dark. Railton broke a peat block with his stick and the dull reflections touched his stern, lined face. Jim began to think the bleak, dark country bred rather bleak and stubborn folk.

"Mrs. Firth's children are, I suppose, my half-cousins," he remarked. "Where are they?"

"Firth carries on his business at the market town, and after he married Kate he bought a mortgage on Staneghyll, the farm across the fields. The house is good and in summer he uses it at week-ends. His daughter, Kirstine, is much at London; she is altogether up-to-date and ambitious to be fashionable. Frank has a job at Leeds, but in holidays he loafs about Staneghyll and sometimes shoots my grouse. The boy is extravagant and slack."

It looked as if Railton did not like his nephew and niece, if that was their relationship. Jim did not know if one talked about a half-nephew. After brooding for a few moments, Railton looked up.

"Now you know something about us, and if you stop at Goldsike, you may see my object for enlightening you. I want a working superintendent, but you must learn your job, and for a few months you will be satisfied to look about and help where you are useful. Your pay begins to-morrow."

He stated the sum. From a Canadian's point of view, it was not large, but Jim imagined money bought more in England.

"If you have had enough in twelve months, you can go back, at my cost, to Calgary," Railton

went on. "If you resolve to stop and I am satisfied, I'll engage you for three years. For the second and third years your pay will advance by fifty per cent."

"And when the time fixed runs out, sir?"

"We might revise the agreement to your advantage. In fact, I do not think you will have much grounds to grumble," Railton replied with a queer smile.

He began to talk about his flock, and when the room was altogether dark Jim went off to bed. He was soon asleep, and when he woke and reached for his watch the time was six o'clock. Boots rattled on cobble-stones, somebody whistled shrilly, and Jim heard a gate thrown back against the wall. By and by a dog barked, cattle pushed noisily into the yard, and he got up.

The house, at the back, occupied one side of an enclosed square; and an arch in the high wall commanded the dale. Looking out from the kitchen step, Jim saw the receding pastures and little woods get less distinct, until, in the far background, all melted in a blue, rolling plain.

The great barn across the yard was built of uncut stones, bedded in thick lime, and the gently curved roof was flagged. The wide mewstead doors were fastened back and he smelt sweating hay. In the open cartbays, crooked beams, fastened by wooden pegs, carried the heavy flags. It looked as if the builders had used such material as the dale supplied, but Jim imagined the barn had stood for a hundred years. Lichens, moss and house-leeks coloured the stones, and tiny ferns grew in the cracks.

He approved the thick-walled byre. The stall posts were oak, worn by the milkers' flanks, but the cement floor was new; Railton had talked about the meddlesome Ministry of Agriculture. All was clean. In

summer, the milkers kept the fields at night. One smelt their sweet breath, and their bodies gently steamed. Jim studied the animals. They were not numerous; for the most part, Goldsike was a sheep farm. Two or three, he supposed, were Ayrshires, the hornless, belted cows were cross-bred, and got the black from the Angus strain, but one large black beast was not an Angus. The byreman told him she was a Galloway.

He went to see the young stock in the calf holes. They were sturdy little brutes and cleanly bedded in dry fern. Water splashed in a slate trough at the dairy door, and a big slab carried the bright tin churns. He thought the cooler and separator the best one could buy, and a belt and pulley indicated that the barrel churn was not revolved by hand.

When Jim went back to the house he reckoned the sum the Goldsike steadings cost would buy a good Canadian farm, but in the North-West one did not expect one's barn to stand for a hundred years. When the thin clapboards and wooden shingles perished, one built another. Yet all he had seen stood for high efficiency and firm control. The English were slow and their methods were not up to date? It looked as if they were, at all events, competent.

His breakfast was served in the panelled room; he did not yet know one dines in the kitchen at a typical hill farm. Railton was not down, and the housekeeper stated he had not for some time got up for breakfast.

"The master's not old, but since he was hurt when the flood was in the low field he has age on him," she said, and gave Jim a thoughtful look. "You are your father's marrow, but he was quiate—— Well, you'll likely be some help."

"I must try. Do you imply that you're doubtful, ma'm?"

She gave him a slow smile; Jim had begun to

remark that the dalesfolks' smile was slow, but he thought her stanch to his house.

"We'll summer you and winter you; and then we'll can judge."

"Looks a useful rule. One mustn't be rash; but I hope you will make some allowance for a beginner. A stranger has much to learn. What about the men?"

"They're as good as you'll get, but they are obstinate and like the ways they know. Then Goldsike's a large farm, and needs the master's eye."

"Vigilance is the price of prosperity! A more famous man said something of the sort," Jim remarked. "Well, until I know my job, I must be satisfied to watch. Since my uncle is not down, where d'you think I might begin?"

"Shepherd's waiting to take you up fell," the house-keeper replied.

In about twenty minutes Jim and the shepherd climbed a stile over a dry wall. When they crossed the wet meadow on the other side, the man called his dogs.

"Cur-dog's mine, and best on t' fell," he said. "Gan til thee new master, Roy."

Jim gave the fellow a swift glance. He was large and loosely built, his brown skin was lined, but although he was not young, to guess his age was hard. Jim wondered if he meant to be nasty; he talked about a new master, and Mrs. Hope stated the men liked the ways they knew. Wilson's look, however, was inscrutable, and Jim beckoned the rather small, thin, black-and-white dog; the back of his hand towards the animal. The dog advanced cautiously, sniffed Jim's hand, and drew back.

"That's something! I've known him bite a stranger," Wilson remarked. "Noo, Grey Lad."

The other dog was larger and carried himself well.

His coat was a tortoiseshell pattern of sable and white, and the hair on his neck and chest curled. Jim noted his large, brown, trustful eyes. Grey Lad advanced confidently and pushed his rough head into Jim's hand.

"He's young, but he's the makings o' a dog, and he'll likely follow you," the shepherd said. "We're for the tops. Weather's been right for wicks, and when it was dry I was down in meadows at the hay. We'll likely find some Staneghyll sheep in the fresh grass where we burned the moor."

Jim learned by frank inquiry that *wicks* are the larvæ of a fly which strikes the sheep when their wool is wet; and that heather, as far as possible, is burned in spring, in order that sheep and grouse may feed on the fresh shoots. At the top of the meadow they crossed a bog. Clumps of tall grass and heather dotted the treacherous moss, and stood like islands in the slimy pools. It looked as if the shepherd knew by instinct where the ground would bear his foot, but clumps on which Jim stepped were rotten, and once or twice he plunged to his knees. He imagined he might have gone deeper had he been alone.

When they reached firm soil, water bubbled from the eyelets in his boots, and his trousers were smeared by muddy peat. He rather thought the shepherd amused, but he at all events said nothing, and Jim admitted that frontiersmen did not hesitate to banter a tenderfoot.

"When the ground is soft in Canada, we use rubber boots," he remarked.

"They'd likely last for two-a-three weeks on fellside stanes. Wages 'll be high in Canada?" Wilson rejoined.

Jim admitted that he was answered. The dalesmen had not much use for picturesque exaggeration. Their remarks were rather epigrammatic, and when they

were humorous perhaps only a dalesman knew. You might not think them speedy, but when you followed one across a bog you acknowledged that he went fast enough.

They climbed a steep slope, through wet fern and tangled heather that stopped at the bottom of a long bank of stones. A row of sheep, moving in file, obliquely crossed the pitch, and the gravel tinkled musically where it slipped away from their feet. Wilson signed the dogs, and although his hand but moved they crouched by his legs. His glance swept the straggling file.

"Twea score and tyan, and aw are ours," he said. "I'd thowt to see some Staneghyll ewes and lambs. You would ken them by their tails. Stoddart got them cut rather late."

Jim knew something about cattle, but nothing about lambs, and when a North-American is puzzled he frankly inquires. As a rule, a Scot and a Cumbrian waits.

"Why do you cut their tails?"

Wilson explained. The fly is most dangerous when the wool is damp, and a long tail, brushing the wet heather, helps its attack.

"A wickt sheep crawls away and lies up by her lone," he said. "We'll likely find some, but if you are to be back for dinner, we must tak' the scree."

They went up. Jim's advance was laboured, and sometimes the stones, rolling down in a noisy wave, carried him back for a yard or two. He noted that the dogs went cautiously, as if the sharp stuff hurt their feet. Where the sheep had crossed, he stopped for a moment and admitted he would sooner take their path. The path was four or five inches wide, and if one walked like an Indian, would bear one's foot. It looked as if the animals knew where the stones would

rest. The shepherd, however, steered for a gully in a terraced crag, and although they sent down wet shale and broken blocks, they reached the top.

White cloudberry flowers shone in the wet turf; white clouds trailed swift shadows across the long-backed moors. Pierced by desolate valleys and black ravines, peat and heath and outcrop crag rolled north to Scotland. The sikes and becks that seamed the moors were small, for Jim had climbed to England's northern watershed, and one bleak hill whose terraced top he noted, commands the springs of Wear and Tees and Tyne. No smoke stained the calm sky, and all he heard was a bleating lamb. A red grouse skimmed the heather; a buzzard circled across a dale and melted in the sun.

For a time he followed the shepherd across rolling moor, and at one spot he saw some rusty wire and the stubs of posts where a fence had run. Wilson said a fence was sometimes convenient, but sometimes was not. The fellow's habit was to talk like that. Jim imagined a good shepherd had no use for artificial safeguards and would sooner trust his, and his dogs', cleverness. Besides, where you protect yourself against your neighbour you protect him from you.

They found two or three blown sheep. One had crept into a hollow under a rocky shelf, and when Wilson got to work Jim held the can of dressing and studied the operation. The stained wool had begun to fall off and the wicks ate into the living flesh. Jim's impulse was to swear. He hated to see an animal hurt, and since he was young, pity was mixed with anger. He agreed with the printed slogan displayed at some small Canadian towns: "Your business is to swat that blasted fly."

The sheep, when released, went dully to another hole and lay down in the shade. Wilson rubbed his hands in the heath.

"I doubt she's done with. Weel, I'm for the high Pike, but master's expecting you for dinner, and if you follow the beck behind the hill, the water will carry you down. T' dog will gan with you, and if you see some small, black-faced sheep they're Staneghyll's, and you'll turn them back South to me."

He went off with a slow, smooth stride. Jim sat down behind a rock and lighted his pipe.

IX

KIRSTINE FIRTH

FOR ten minutes Jim smoked his pipe and mused, and Grey Lad snapped at hovering flies. The dog was a dalesman's dog, and for all his youth, did not uselessly range about. Jim smiled. For two or three hours he had followed a dalesman across the hills, and he had begun to feel he needed a rest. He touched the dog's head. Grey Lad, at all events, was willing to trust a stranger; and if the Goldsike folks were just, they would try him out. He would sooner be friendly, but where he was forced he'd fight.

Behind the rock, the sun was hot. Jim smelt the warm peat and heard a hen grouse call her brood. A circling curlew trilled joyously on a high note. He thought about the blown sheep and frowned. Some folks called Nature beneficent. The fools who talked like that had not fronted a Canadian blizzard and known a wheat crop cut to pulpy mush by hail. Nature was blindly cruel and man's part was protagonist. All he got was paid for by somebody's sweat and thought. Yet some touched easy money; for example, the Frensham gang. Jim shrugged and admitted he had not much grounds to boast. The plausible city slob had found him a trustful simp. Anyhow, he was not much of a philosopher, and he had engaged to watch out for some black-faced sheep.

He got on his feet, and in a boggy hollow down the hill Grey Lad found the sheep. The flock splashed

across a beck and sped up a slope. Jim saw their woolly backs break the tall fern and Grey Lad jump from the tossing stuff, as if it cut his view. The trouble was, the sheep were not going where they ought, and he did not know the orders a fell dog understands. Shouting in good Canadian, he started after the flock, but his glance searched the fern and he did not remark a mossy well-hole three or four yards in front.

The moss did not carry him; water bubbled round his sinking boots, and the bog closed about his legs. The hole was perhaps, not deep, but in order to get out, he needed a fulcrum, and his feet found none. After floundering savagely for a few moments, he stopped and looked about. He saw the flock and dog vanish across the top of the fern-covered pitch, and a clump of mountain-ashes by a rock; and then a girl rode into the picture. A few moments sooner, leaping sheep had streamed past her pony and a dog had dived between its legs. The animal's temper was not serene, and when Jim first saw the girl she swung about in the saddle while the pony went down the bank with cat-like jumps. He imagined she was not a first-class horsewoman and it looked as if the saddle moved. Unless he could get out of the bog, the brute would pitch her off.

He did get out, and a moment or two afterwards jumped for the bridle. As a rule, a horse kicks with its hind feet, but an annoyed fell pony is not fastidious, and when Jim dodged its lifted front hoofs, its ears went back and it tried to bite. He, however, had conquered wild range horses, and the pony, feeling his firm hand, acknowledged him master. Then he looked up at the girl.

He noted her red hair and red mouth; excitement and strain had touched with vivid colour her white skin. Yet her glance was cool, and the smile she gave

him was not embarrassed. He thought her shapely ; anyhow, the white cord breeches and thin, green coat indicated a well-balanced figure.

"Since you got out of the well-hole, I suppose I was lucky," she said.

Jim noted that spongy moss stuck to his soaked trousers and his boots were crusted by chocolate-coloured peat.

"Where I was is pretty obvious. I'd begun to think I might stop there."

"I saw you plunge in. I had stopped my pony by the trees, and when the sheep surrounded him he tried to run away. You did not know you had an audience ? *Audience* is perhaps the proper word."

Jim tried to recapture his remarks. It was not important ; an up-to-date young woman knew where to make allowances. The girl was up-to-date. She studied him with a touch of careless humour she thought satirical.

"If you are going some distance, you had better get down and let me fix the cinch," he said. "Then, since you ride across, we might move the stirrup."

She got down, and when Jim stooped to reach the girth the pony turned its head. He saw its ears twitch and the corner of a spiteful eye.

"Can you hold the brute ? I need both hands," he said.

She took the bridle, sliding a firm hand up to the bit link, which she thought the safest spot, since so long as she held on, the animal could not use its teeth. When Jim imagined it might try, she clenched her other hand and struck. Well, a horse must know who was master, and her nerve was good.

"Thank you," she said when he had braced the saddle and altered the stirrups. "You do know something about horses."

"You know where to stop," said Jim. "My ignor-

ance about sheep is obvious, and I have not begun to learn the orders a Cumbrian gives his dog. A stranger might imagine them Chinese."

"I dare say they were Norwegian, a long time since. You are satisfied with North-American? When one is properly, or improperly, annoyed, I suppose one uses one's native idiom."

"Oh, well, I am Canadian. But the saddle's now all right. Will you get up?"

"And take the road?" said the girl, with a baffling laugh. "In Canada, one perhaps does not bother to be polite. My pluck is as good as another's, but I was rather shaken and for a few minutes I think I'll rest. If you are not much occupied, you might hold the pony."

She sat down where the mountain-ashes' shadow fell across a rocky shelf, and Jim tied the pony. He felt he was rather commanded than allowed to stop. The girl was imperious and he imagined the men she knew indulged her. In the shade flies were numerous, and when she flicked about a small handkerchief he broke a thin branch from the mountain-ash.

"Thank you," she said. "Olives do not grow in Cumberland, but your giving me a rowan branch is strange. Not very long since we thought it a charm against witchcraft and all the powers of the dark."

She touched her face with the branch. Her mouth and hair were red; Jim thought her eyes liquid green like sea water. Somehow the girl was *vivid*. He did not know if she was beautiful; he did not know if she really attracted him, but so long as she allowed it, he wanted to stop. He turned his head and his glance searched the hill.

"Your dog will come back," the girl remarked. "He is young and keen, but I imagine he and you do

not altogether know your job. The sheep you scattered were Goldsike sheep."

"Then, we certainly moved the wrong lot," Jim agreed. "I was looking for some black-faces that our man reckoned might have strayed from Stane-ghyll."

"It was obvious," the girl rejoined with the baffling smile Jim, on the whole, disliked. "Bob Wilson imagined *our* sheep were trespassing, but the lot you moved were Herdwicks and their faces are not black. Then you might have noted a ruddle stain on the wool."

"Now I think about it, all I saw was their backs. Since you talked about your sheep, I suppose you are Miss Stoddart?"

"The argument is logical, but the conclusion's wrong. In the hills, the flock, as a rule, is the landlord's and goes with the farm. Stoddart is a tenant and has not a daughter. If he had a daughter, I expect she would not be my sort."

Jim agreed. The girl was cultivated; anyhow she was sophisticated. She knew her queer charm and one noted her scornful humour. Nothing indicated that she was friendly, but she had charm.

"You have not yet solved the puzzle?" she resumed. "Well, I am Kirstine Firth, and to some extent, your relation. In town, the name is Christine."

"Of course!" said Jim. "Sometimes I am dull."

Kirstine swung the rowan branch and gave him a cool smile. At Vancouver Jim had seen Bizet's opera, and he thought she used the branch as Carmen used her fan.

"You do not state you are pleased to meet me, but perhaps you were warned. Old Jim, of course, is not my admirer. But here is your dog."

Grey Lad leaped from the fern, and stopping by

Jim's feet, beat his tail on the turf. His look was apologetic and Jim touched his head. Kirstine flicked her fingers and the dog advanced slowly, as if he hesitated, but when she called in a quiet voice came to her hand. She let him go and laughed.

"One likes to conquer. For all the popular superstition, to cheat a dog is not harder than to cheat some men. Then my pony tried to bite you—— But a *drow* is rolling across the pike fell and I must start."

The moor top melted in thin grey cloud, and Jim loosed the pony and put her up.

"I think the stirrup is the proper length and the saddle will not move. Might I ask who fastened the cinch for you?"

"I myself," said Kirstine. "You, no doubt, imagined something like that? Well, I suppose to get one's own back is some satisfaction."

"One tries not to be shabby."

"Particularly where a girl is your opponent? You are old-fashioned, Mr. Railton. A girl might be a worse antagonist than you think. But the ground is soft, and until we reach the green road, I'd sooner go slowly. If you like, I will show you an easier line to Goldsike than the line I expect you took."

For a time they followed a little stream that gurgled and sparkled between tall rushes. Mist floated about them and thin rain fell; and then the sun pierced the vapour, which rolled back up the moor, and six or seven hundred feet below them, Goldsike shone in yellow light. A broken road, banked on the lower side, curved down the hill.

"Your grandfather's miners cut the track for their sledges," Kirstine remarked. "The old tunnel starts from the ghyll on your right. The beck at its foot is the Goldsike. Tradition states that Queen Elizabeth's German miners found gold there, and since they

supposititiously dug for gold at other spots, it's possible. Elizabeth did not squander useful funds."

She stopped her horse, and Jim looked about. The miners' road curved round a projecting spur, and he saw two ghylls. One, a mile or two off on the south, bordered by small trees and commanded by limestone cliffs, was Staneghyll, and crossed Stoddart's farm. The other, on the north, was a dark ravine. The beck it fed touched Goldsike and joined the Staneghyll stream in the dale.

"I suppose you knew me at the beginning?" Jim remarked.

"My dear man, everybody in the dale will soon know all about you. For example, you had a ranch at Calgary and you crossed on board the *Megantic*, but you do not look much like an American."

"On the whole, the particulars are accurate, but my ranch was not at Calgary. One would not, I expect, buy a farm at Leeds. Then Canadians are not conspicuously Western and wild."

"There is another thing. In the dales we speculate about our neighbours' business, and we believe we know why you were called to Goldsike."

"I was not called; I offered to come across," Jim rejoined in a thoughtful voice. "All the same, my uncle did invite me another time. You see, I was raised on a cattle ranch, and he gets old and infirm."

Kirstine laughed and started her pony.

"I don't know if you are remarkably modest, but you admitted you sometimes were dull. One can engage an expert English cowman for about thirty-six shillings—seven dollars—a week, and the fellow old Jim has got is competent. In consequence, we imagine your uncle's object is to baffle any foolish hopes his other relations might indulge. I am not afraid to be vulgar, and it looks as if he meant you to put my brother's nose out of joint. Still, I do not

think Frank was hopeful. For one thing, he knows old Jim."

"Your object is not very obvious," Jim remarked.

"Oh, well, I am a sort of relation and I thought I ought to put you wise. Then, if you are naturally malicious, to feel you can disturb people is satisfying, and a chance to annoy your uncle must not be missed. Well, I have perhaps given you something to ponder ; and since we have reached the green road, I must push on."

Bordered by fern and covered by short grass the sheep had cropped, a winding track crossed the moor. Kirstine touched her pony, and for a few moments Grey Lad, his ears cocked alertly, watched them go. Then he leaped across the turf and tried to bite the pony's heels. Jim heard Kirstine laugh, and calling the dog, he took the miners' road. On the whole, he would sooner he had not met Kirstine Firth. She admitted she was malicious ; he did not yet know if she was antagonistic, but he acknowledged her disturbing.

The shower that swept the fell had not touched the meadows in the dale, and when Jim reached Goldsike a low bogie truck, loaded with hay, was under a round hole in the barn. A muscular fellow lifted the top of the pile on his fork, and pushed it up to another at the window. When the stuff vanished in the mow he turned to Jim.

"You'll likely can pitch, Mr. Railton ? "

Jim said he had done so, and the other nodded.

"Weather's none too settled, and if I get back, we might put another pike in mew by dinner."

He went off, and Jim, pulling off his coat, got to work. In the North-West he was reckoned a good haymaker, but he doubted if the load he balanced on his fork was as large as the load the dalesman moved. To be annoyed about it was ridiculous, and anyhow,

he was fast. The fellow who spread the stuff in the barn roof would have to hustle.

The hay was dark yellow ; it had begun to sweat and one noted its hot smell. Green hay was best, but in Cumberland one could not reckon on much sun. Since the large pile was firm and symmetrical, he imagined one pulled the flat bogie under the stuff when it had stood for some time in the field, and moved it in one lump. A useful plan, but with a derrick and tackle, one could hoist the lot to the top of the barn. He might think about it. In the meantime, he must use his fork.

Rhythmic effort was bracing. His body swung smoothly, the shining prongs pierced the hay, and the load went up. Force was needed, but one must calculate one's reach and speed ; Jim admitted he was happiest when he was usefully occupied. Kirstine had interested him ; disturbed was perhaps the word. Her mouth was very red and her skin was like ivory. It was not important, and now he had work to do, the picture got indistinct. Before he began to think about young women, he must be richer than he could hope to be for long. Since he was a boy he had thought about Helen, and although he mustn't claim she had let him down, but for her he might not have bored for coal.

She was gone. He had not lost her, for she never was his, and the queer thing was, he was less hurt than he had thought. Anyhow, man's proper business was to labour ; to cultivate the soil and so forth, and Jim admitted he liked his job. He smiled, and for a moment straightened his back. It looked as if he was crowding the fellow in the mow.

"Can't you take some more?" he asked.

"When I've filled up corner, I'll take aw you'll pitch," the other rejoined.

Jim laughed and rubbed his wet hands on his

clothes. He must beat the fellow to it, and in a few minutes he flung the last forkful into the hole. He imagined it buried his helper, but he started the horse, and the bogie rattled across the cobble-stones. Mist crept down the fell and he pulled out his watch. Before they stopped for dinner, they might put another pike in the mow.

X

JIM STAYS WITH HIS JOB

A PEAT fire burned in the wide grate and dull reflections touched the panelling. There was not another light, for at Goldsike one kept the sun's time and when the laborious day was over all went soon to bed. The evening was serene and Jim saw pale stars come out above the black moor's top. Railton in an easy chair, put up his pipe.

"You made good work in the meadow this afternoon," he remarked.

"So long as you are satisfied, sir——" Jim replied. "I had thought we might get a pike or two from the field across the dyke. The boys are willing. They engaged they'd *fricken* to-morrow all the stuff we were forced to leave."

"The Canadian is scare," said Railton. "Then I expect you don't talk about a hay pike and in Canada a wall is not a dyke. However, in Cumberland, a dyke is sometimes a hedge."

"There's the queer thing. I suppose I heard the men—— All the same, I didn't consciously, try to use their words."

"You used them mechanically," said Railton with a smile. "Well, you spring from old north-country stock, and we do not yet know all about inheritance. However, in the afternoon to-morrow I want you to go up the fell with Wilson and move some lambs. In fact, for a time you might concentrate on the flock.

Sheep are our mainstay and lambs are going to fetch a large price at the back-end sales."

"The back-end is our fall?"

"Properly, it's autumn," Railton observed.

For a minute or two he talked about sheep farming. In the fells, the flock, as a rule, was the landlord's, and when a tenant went the sheep must be equal in number and quality to the lot he got. One man could feed more sheep than another on the same *heaf*, but he was the sort his neighbours did well to watch. At the back-end you drafted out a number of the lambs, which low-country farmers bought and folded in turnip fields to be sold in spring; you must cut down the flock for winter, when food is short. When the snow was deep, after the new year, the ewes must be fed and sometimes the hay ran out.

"You have some plough land, but I expect the cattle need the crop?" said Jim. "After corn, you grow turnips, and another lot of corn. Then, for some years, the land goes back to grass?"

Railton nodded. "You sow seeds-grass with the last corn. We, however, have not much arable, and on our high ground all sown crops are thin."

"In consequence, you must husband all the natural food the fellside grows. A good ring fence ought to be some help."

"You might reckon the cost," said Railton with dry humour. "Then a Cumbrian hates to pay for his neighbour's dishonesty. Mine at Staneghyll is not scrupulous."

"Staneghyll is Firth's, and you stated he is a lawyer. Why did he buy the farm?"

"For one thing, the land was mortgaged, and he got a foreclosure order to seize it for the debt. Then his holding Staneghyll helps him annoy me, because when Stoddart and I dispute about his flock's trespassing the fellow knows he may be sure of his land-

lord's support. In fact, I believe Firth discreetly encourages him. We are a queer lot, my lad, and our habit is not to forget an injury. Sometimes the grievance is handed down from father to son."

"But Firth was not really cheated, sir."

"His wife was not as rich as he imagined, and when Kate was baffled her temper was not sweet," said Railton with bleak humour. "He reckoned on her getting the land at Low Scale. Her mother had resolutely schemed for it. I have speculated about that drafted will."

Jim pondered. His uncle admitted his folk were hard folk and sometimes handed down a dispute. It might account for the hostility he had sensed in Kirstine Firth, and he narrated their meeting on the fell.

"The red-haired besom is at Staneghyll and she'd soon know you had arrived," Railton observed in a thoughtful voice. "She's as scheming as her father, and she moves fast."

Where he led was obvious, but Jim modestly objected:

"Miss Firth was not remarkably friendly. Besides, if she is, as you stated, fashionable and ambitious——"

"She might not think you worth exploiting?" said Railton with a chuckle. "Well, where the reward might justify some risk, the lass is not the sort to hesitate, and it's possible she reflected that you never know——"

He stopped and frowned. Somehow Jim thought him disturbed, but there was nothing to be said. To declare he was rather repelled than attracted was invidious. Moreover, he did not know if it was altogether accurate.

"If you are not a fool, you will leave the jade alone," his uncle resumed. "Kirstine knows her charm, and you are flesh and blood. Now and then

she trails a young *laiker* from London about the dale, but if she has a soft heart for anybody, Wat Hódgin is the man."

"I thought him a good sort," said Jim. "But what is a *laiker*?"

"You might translate it loafer. Since you refuse to talk about Kirstine, Wat is a canny lad and, if she does not meddle, might be a useful friend."

"I suppose he is not a typical hill-side farmer?"

"Nowt o't sort," Railton agreed with a twinkle. "Wat is a *statesman*. He inherited The Nook and went there when he tired of his job in town. I believe the simple life attracts some bright young people."

"After all, sir, a cultivated man can use his talents on a farm."

"Oh, quite," said Railton. "I have known one or two whom the adventure did not break, and so far Wat contrives to meet his bills. My cowman tells me he is not too squeamish to clean his byre. But at Goldsike we get up soon and I am going to bed."

For five or six days Jim and the shepherd roamed the moors; and then he started alone one afternoon for a dalehead at the other end of the Goldsike boundary. Railton no longer took the hills, but Jim began to think the old fellow knew where his sheep fed and when they must be moved. To some extent he controlled their wanderings as a commander at the base might direct his battalions' advance. Studying the wind and weather, he knew, at all events, where the scattered companies ought to be, and for how long they might be allowed to occupy the ground. Moreover, he knew where trespassers might invade the *heaf*. Jim did not; sometimes he did not know whether the small grey objects in the heath and fern were sheep or stones, and when he started for the fell he carried good glasses.

In the steep meadows by the Staneghyll beck the

sun was hot and flies were numerous, but bright drops yet sparkled in the shorn grass, which was marked by yellow circles where the hay pikes had stood. The strong smell of meadowsweet floated about a ditch, and tall willow herb opened its red flowers behind a wall. In the next field, the shadow of a crag across the beck touched the grass, and two indistinct figures vanished in the mountain-ashes by the bank.

Grey Lad barked, and tilting his head on one side, fixed his eyes on Jim as if he waited for orders. Jim signed the dog to heel, and started for the beck. Light and trembling shadow chequered a pool in the limestone. At the top was a low fall; and then the current, swirling up from a pothole, splashed the ledges and sped across large stones to the sparkling shallow at the tail.

Hodson, whose clothes harmonized with the moss, leaned against a rock. Had he not turned his head and smiled, Jim might not have noted him. Besides, Kirstine Firth was in the pool, and she, so to speak, dominated the picture. Jim imagined her habit was to do so wherever she was. She had no stockings, but brown canvas shoes guarded her feet. Her dress was short and her legs glimmered. They did not shine; in the sliding water, her skin was flat white. A thin, dull-green oilskin coat covered her body; her red hair was a splash of colour.

She swung a short, built-up fishing rod. Jim could not see the line and gut trace. All he saw was a small red worm that vanished in the pothole, and then was lifted a yard or two from her feet. He was not a fisherman, but he imagined the worm went exactly where she thought a trout would lie. Somehow one knew Kirstine did not squander effort. She had for a background rocks and trees, but his figure perhaps cut the sky, and he quietly steered for a silver birch. Kirstine looked up.

"Hello, Jim!" she said and turned to Hodson. "I am coming out. There is no use in fishing where the fish are not."

"Sounds like an epigram," Hodson remarked. "All the same, you can't persuade me I did not see a trout take a down-looker."

"Down-looker flies live in oak trees," Kirstine rejoined. "Sometimes a man's love for particulars entangles him. A woman would be satisfied to state she saw a trout——" She signed Jim. "However, since Wat is slow and the moss is treacherous, you might give me your hand."

Balancing for a moment on a shelf, she reached the bank-top and sat down in the stones. Jim did not see her smooth out the short dress, but it now went, for an inch or two, across her knees. He admitted a touch of embarrassment; the frontierswomen he knew did not pull off their stockings when young men were about.

"To use waders in a fellside beck would be ridiculous," she said. "Wat, as you may see, sticks to his shooting boots. For all his youthful look, he's palæo-Victorian."

Hodson, splashing through the tail shallow, turned his head.

"Something to do with fossils? Well, my feet are not beautiful, and since my home's in Cumberland, they are often wet. However, if you don't want to catch that trout, I think I'll take a smoke."

Stretching his legs in the wild thyme, he began to load his pipe. Kirstine flicked across the small, two-hook Stewart tackle.

"Now we are going to loaf, you might pull off the worm."

Hodson did so, and resumed his occupation. Kirstine shrugged.

"If you were civilized, you would clean your hands."

"It's possible," said Hodson coolly. "You declared I am palæo-Victorian! Moorside folk date much farther back. In some respects, I reckon we are yet stone-age folk. It's important, my lady."

Kirstine gave him a queer, brooding look, and Jim wondered whether Wat exaggerated much. Kirstine was modern, but one sensed a sort of ruthless force, and her beauty, in a way, was primitive. When he met her on the hill she had not bothered to hide her scornful antagonism; yet he thought she had consciously used her charm. There was the queer thing, because he did not see why a young woman should wish to charm somebody whom she thought she had grounds to dislike. He ought perhaps to be warned, but he was intrigued.

Since he imagined she studied him with a touch of malicious amusement, he examined the beautiful little rod. The check-reel was made like a watch, the silk line was coloured to harmonize with stones and water, and the thin gut trace was almost invisible. He thought the outfit an expensive toy. A fish of useful size would smash the lot.

Lifting the creel lid, he saw five or six trout on a wet dock leaf. They were brown and blue and silver, with a row of delicate pink spots, and he reckoned the largest might weigh four ounces. The outfit with which one caught them must cost twenty dollars.

"When did you start fishing?" he inquired.

"About eleven o'clock; we carried our lunch," Hodson replied. "Not a business proposition? For all that, unless you are a fisherman, there's more to it than you might think."

Jim laughed. "You got me first time, and you have got our talk nearly right. Where'd you learn it?"

"Moving pictures and gramophones have done something to educate us," Kirstine rejoined. "In

the dales we are bi-lingual. Our English is perhaps not Oxford English, but we use another sort, that some people claim is good Anglo-Saxon. When our fathers aspired to be cultivated, they seasoned their talk with *mots* from Paris, but civilization advances and our model is now Hollywood. However, if you like to join us, you can take Wat's rod. He will carry the basket and put on the worms."

Jim wanted to join them, but he hesitated. For one thing, he had undertaken to look for some sheep.

"Do you generally use a worm?" he asked.

"Sure we do," said Hodson. "You mustn't be misled by the stuff some dry-fly merchants talk and write. If you can, with a small red worm, catch a trout in a Cumberland beck when the water is as clear as glass, you're a fisherman, my lad."

"The best dry-fly thrower could not, so to speak, do it the first time," Kirstine remarked. "I am willing to teach you, without a fee. Aren't you keen to begin?"

"I ought to be half-way up the fell," said Jim. "I might experiment another time. But how long d'you think——?"

"If you have natural talent, you might be proficient in three years. Some people have talents their friends do not suspect."

"Quite," said Hodson. "Modesty doesn't help. When I was at Edinburgh, a pal hired a fiddle for the vacation. He engaged he'd learn to play a thing like that in three months. I knew another——"

"They were Scots; but if we are to fish the elbow pool, we cannot wait for your memoirs. Are you coming, Jim?"

"I hate to refuse, but I must," Jim replied.

Hodson laughed. "If the remark is allowable, I like your pluck."

"You haven't got my job. I was sent up the fell

to look for some sheep," said Jim, and turned to Kirstine. "If I might at another time have a lesson

"Another time I might be occupied," Kirstine rejoined. "However, I expect your habit is to stay with your job, and I hope you will find the sheep."

Jim went off and Hodson gave Kirstine a smile.

"Looks as if the young fella' did not know his luck. Since he's a Railton, you can reckon on his being firm, but I begin to think him rather a good sort."

"It's possible," said Kirstine in a careless voice.

"To some extent, I'm a Railton, and I suppose I hate to be baffled—— However, it has nothing to do with you."

"That is so, my lady. My business is but to indulge you. Sometimes the job would be easier if I knew where your cogitations led."

"In the meantime, we are going to fish the elbow pool. Bring the rods and basket," Kirstine ordered.

XI

AFTERNOON TEA

BEHIND the stone pike on the moor top the sun was hot, and Jim, lying in the heather, smoked a cigarette. He had found the sheep, and if he went fast, he might be back at Goldsike for tea at four o'clock. In fact, since the time was between hay and harvest, when farmstead work is slack, he might have gone fishing for the most part of the afternoon. Yet he had not, and he felt he must review his grounds for refusing to stop with Kirstine at the elbow pool.

For one thing, he was his uncle's servant and a servant must go where he is sent, particularly when his master was old Jim Railton. The argument was plausible, but it did not cover all the ground. Jim wondered whether he was afraid of Kirstine Firth. To run away from a girl was ridiculous, and if she thought he had done so, he pictured her amusement. Then he had not long since thought himself Helen's lover; anyhow, although she declared he really never was her lover, her marrying Steve had hurt. Helen hated shabbiness; she was frank and proud and stanch. Jim did not think Kirstine very much like that.

It was done with. Helen had married Steve, and he was at Goldsike, where it looked as if he had got a man's-size job. Since he was not a careless philanderer and a man's proper business was to concentrate on his occupation, he ought to be satisfied. He was satisfied, and Kirstine had nothing to do with him. Yet he had frankly run away from her.

Jim did not know if she was altogether beautiful; he knew her arrogant and imperious, but somehow she carried you away. Her glance was not inviting; it was rather scornfully amused, as if she made sure of your indulging her. Jim smiled. He, at all events, had refused, and he wondered whether Kirstine was annoyed.

His uncle had implied that she might try to cultivate him. To see her object was hard. He certainly was not important, and he had not remarked that he had much attraction for young women. But she perhaps imagined his capture might annoy Railton. Then she had stated that his uncle meant to use him and his business was, vulgarly, to put her brother's nose out of joint.

Jim knitted his brows. The old fellow had said nothing about his inheriting Goldsike, but he was a nearer relation than Frank Firth. Anyhow, he did not yet know if he would be willing to stop in the Old Country; when the three years were up he might have had enough. Independence was worth something, and to wait, in a servant's post, for a man one liked to die was not a noble part. For all his queer grim humour, old Jim was a first-class sort.

Young Jim got up and smiled, a crooked smile. He had run away from Kirstine, and the proper line was to keep it up, like the fellow in the English play at the Vancouver opera house.

When he reached Goldsike tea was over, but supper was served about seven o'clock, and he went to help the shepherd mend a dry wall a horse had knocked down. The stones were not shaped and no lime was used. Jim picked up the ragged blocks, which Wilson locked in the fellside waller's bond.

"Yan on two, and two on yan, and where ye can find a lang straight bit it gans right through," he said.

It looked easy and Wilson kept his helper occupied,

but Jim imagined the fellow's father and grandfather had bonded stones like that, and since the wall was four feet high, some judgment must be used. Then, although he did not bother about a line and level, the wall's front was straight and true.

Jim, as fast as possible, supplied the stones. He smelt meadowsweet, and sweating hay in the mowstead across the field. The stuff was warm and smelt rather like rich tobacco. By and by a stone behind him rattled, and looking up, he saw Railton lean on his stick.

"You might have called me, sir. Ought you to be about?"

"I don't know; I am about," said Railton, and pushed his stick against the wall. "You work fast, Bob. I like a dyke to stand."

"You'll not can shift her," Wilson rejoined. "The old mare might, but so long as she doesn't see where she can clim', she'll likely bide and leeuck ower top."

Railton sat down on the piled stones.

"Do you think you'll make a waller, Jim?"

"In a year or two I might tell you, sir."

"One must wait and see? Modesty is perhaps not a quality that distinguishes up-to-date youth. However, what about the sheep?"

Jim stated where he had moved the flock, and Railton resumed:

"You went up by the beck. I thought I saw Wat and Kirstine fishing. Did they not ask you to join them?"

Jim said they had done so, but he refused because he did not know how long he might be occupied on the fell, and so forth. He felt his explanation was rather laboured, and Railton studied him with twinkling eyes.

"Just that! When we are young we are independ-

ent, but you are willing to weigh an old fellow's advice, and follow it where you approve."

A kitchen-maid called them to supper and before Jim again saw Kirstine eight or nine days went. He had gone down to the bank at the market town, and while he waited for a reaper knife Kirstine came from a garage.

"They cannot put my car right before to-morrow," she said. "Father is at a company meeting in London, and since I am stopping at Staneghyll, the servants have got a holiday."

"I expect to start in half an hour," said Jim. "I am driving the milk digby, but I have some empty churns on board, and I don't know if the rig is your sort of rig."

Kirstine laughed. "You do not know much about me, my dear man. However, I spring from statesmen farmer stock; if it's important, from the same stock as you, and on a summer afternoon to ride up the dale among the milk churns would be delightfully pastoral."

"Something to do with shepherds?" Jim remarked, and brushed a smear of cattle meal from his clothes. "Well, I reckon I look my part."

"But I do not? I don't know if you're nice. But what are we going to do for half an hour?"

"I was going to sit in the smithy and try to hustle the smith, but you mightn't be interested," Jim replied, and looked up and down the street. "*Tea and refreshments*. Not exactly a *Collins's*, but it might solve the puzzle. Am I allowed to take you to a place like that?"

"To our fashionable tea-shop? Of course," said Kirstine. "Are you often carried away by a brain-wave, Jim?"

They crossed the street and went to a table by a window in the long upper room. Two or three motor tourists looked up and Jim remarked that their glances

followed Kirstine with surprise. Her type was perhaps not the type they had thought to see at a quiet fellside town. Somehow she carried a stamp the tourists did not wear.

Kirstine sensed their curiosity. She knew her clothes as fashionable as theirs, but sun and rain had touched her skin with a delicate bloom that theirs had not, and on a treacherous, sliding scree she could go where a man could go. Yet she imagined the women's interest was not all for her. She knew much better groomed young men than Jim, and to some extent his clothes indicated his occupation. All the same one noted his balance and easy pose, his brown skin, and his calm, direct look. Kirstine was fastidious, but she acknowledged herself satisfied with her escort.

The old bow window commanded the eighteenth-century houses across the market square, and through a gap, grass and trees and the massive tower of the old red church. Kirstine signed a waitress.

"I suppose the table could be moved? On the other side, one can look down into the square."

Jim moved the table, and while the girl waited for Kirstine's order he kept his feet. Kirstine imagined he did not try to be polite; because the other was a girl, he was unconsciously kind. The waitress's eyes were fixed on the tablecloth, and when a tourist imperiously rang a bell she did not look up. Since Kirstine knew north-country folk, she thought the motorists' tea and cakes might be cold, but Jim would get the best the shop supplied.

"Honey?" he said. "At the ranch we used Magnolia drips and punched a hole in the can."

He broke the comb, and when the golden-brown stuff ran out an aromatic smell floated across the table.

"Fresh from the heather; the best there is," said Kirstine. "When the heath's in bloom we move the hives up the moor, and honey loses something as soon

as you break the wax. The straw-coloured stuff in glass jars is another article. However, since the waitress is a daughter of the house——”

Jim rather obviously did not see where she led.

“The whole layout’s good. Since I located in England I begin to feel like a porker.”

“Oh, well, so long as you do not look like a porker,” said Kirstine, and glanced carelessly at a round-faced tourist. “But do you not talk about a *hog*?”

“In his natural state, a hog is thin, and when he roams the woods he’s a razor-back. Before he’s a pork, you have to shut him up and feed him piles of corn. At Goldsike we are not shut up, but we get breakfast, ten o’clock in the fields, and dinner at noon. Then we take our four o’clock, and a first-class supper. The strange thing is, none of the bunch, so to speak, looks like that.”

“The strange thing is, a hill farmer is able to find a wife; but women are supposititiously rash.”

Jim did not think Kirstine rash. He reckoned she went where she meant to go and forced others to take her road. All the same, since nothing implied that she wished to fix his road, she was a charming companion.

By and by a clergyman came in, and when Kirstine signalled, crossed the floor. His hair was white and his skin was lined, but when Kirstine presented Jim his eyes twinkled.

“Mr. Boone is vicar at Nethersceugh, where we sometimes go to church,” she said. “The exploit is possible only when summer is dry, and old folks state another vicar went visiting on horseback and vanished in the bog. All his parishioners found was his black hat and pipe, and if tradition’s accurate, they refused to dig him up.”

“Summer is not often on Sunday, but a road of a sort goes round by the dale,” Boone rejoined. “Your

uncle is an old friend, Mr. Railton, and we would be happy to see you at Nethersceugh. For a stranger, I really think the village an interesting spot. I expect Kirstine's signal implied that I might join you?"

The waitress brought him tea and scones, and he looked about.

"Fresh heather honey! Do you think I might have some? When the beck swept the garth our bees were drowned."

"The honey was for Jim," said Kirstine. "Since he is, to some extent, Canadian, I do not suppose he sticks to all he gets."

Jim looked up as if he were puzzled. The vicar smiled.

"One ought to be discreet; but since the young man has found favour in more fastidious eyes——"

"At one time you did not welcome strangers at Nethersceugh," Kirstine remarked. "In order to keep them out, somebody cut a famous by-pass road."

Boone laughed and turned to Jim.

"Kirstine wishes to indulge me, but an old fellow is entitled to be an antiquarian. The road was built, long since, and guarded by five-foot walls. It goes nowhere but to the fells, and I rather think the builders' object was to prevent strangers using the village street. In the old days, the fellsiders were not a trustful lot."

"We are not yet rashly trustful, and we hate to be robbed," Kirstine rejoined. "Your octogenarians' club was perhaps a good example."

Jim saw the vicar give her a thoughtful glance, but he agreed.

"Before I knew my parishioners, Mr. Railton, I planned a sort of reunion and supper for old folks once a month in the dark winter evenings. The villagers state that at Nethersceugh nobody ever dies, and although the boast is not quite accurate, our octogenarians are rather numerous. The survival of

the fit perhaps. If you can front the first five years on the hills, you are sound stuff. Well, my plan did not work. Each of two old fellows declared he would niver put's foot under seam roof as covered t'odder, and since their friends supported them the function was not held. The dispute began about some ducks eggs, forty years since."

"The eggs did not hatch," Kirstine said to Jim. "Old Steenson yet claims the eggs were bad. Pattinson declares Steenson's old clocker did not ken her job, and he'd have wrung her neck. As a rule, you see, a hen hatches the duck eggs. A stranger might not think the Nethersceughers amiable, but they have been known to admit they liked their vicar."

Boone chuckled, and with his spoon drew a sort of plan on the tablecloth.

"The beck runs through the village. On this side is the green, shaded by noble sycamores. On the other, are gardens and old white houses, the vicarage near the middle of the row, and in front of each a stone slab or a railway sleeper crosses the channel. Our *kurn* supper was late, the floods were out, and the night was thick with rain. At eleven o'clock somebody hammered on the door and a dripping man came into the hall."

"I expect he plunged in. A *kurn* supper is a harvest feast," Kirstine explained.

"My housekeeper inquired what he wanted," Boone resumed. "The fellow said, 'I want Mr. Boone. Parson's a good soul. Fower times I've felt in blasted beck, and he'll likely see me home.'"

"The vicar saw him home," Kirstine remarked. "After all, one cannot allow one's churchwarden to drown."

"We are but flesh and blood, and when your hay pikes go down the beck and your sheep die from fluke, to rejoice at a *kurn* supper implies some pluck,"

said Boone. For a moment or two he was quiet; and then he resumed: "The useful thing is to know where to stop; but I expect the rules we used are long since out of date. Yet some rules have stood from the beginning, and I think must stand. Well, I hope you will come across to see me, Mr. Railton, and if you like fishing——"

Jim admitted a touch of embarrassment and noted Kirstine's rather ironical glance, but he thanked the vicar and she frankly laughed.

"A week or two ago Jim was not at all keen. Nethersceugh's favourite thrill, however, is an otter hunt, and you might perhaps invite us when the hounds meet."

"I expect you know why I would not," Boone rejoined, and getting up, pulled out his watch. "If time permitted, I'd be happy to state my views about the cruel sport, which I dare say was your object. All the same, when the beck runs clear and low, I can yet catch a trout. Well, well, if all were sternly logical, none might be much happier. But I have stopped longer than I thought."

He went off, and soon afterwards Jim went for the reaper knife and loaded Kirstine's parcels in the digby. The afternoon was calm and hot. Lead-coloured clouds hid the moor tops and one sensed thunder brooding in the hills. When a sunbeam touched a slope the light was vivid yellow, and the shadows in the ravines were deep blue. Flies followed the pony along the uphill road and Jim did not push the sweating animal. The last honeysuckle clung to the hedgerows and by the ditches the willow herb's red flowers drooped.

Sometimes Kirstine languidly bantered Jim. He thought her gentler; her jokes did not hurt and force him to ponder. When she was quiet her look was almost kind. In some circumstances, he imagined

she might be really kind. Anyhow, she was strangely attractive.

To light a cigarette by her order was some relief. He would sooner front Kirstine when she was frankly scornful. When she was gentle she was, so to speak, another girl whom he did not know. Anyhow, she must be fronted. He vaguely knew her his antagonist, and he felt her calm was rather like the brooding storm.

In the meantime, he allowed the pony to go as slowly as it would, and when the hedgerows vanished and drystone walls ran up across fern and heath, he was sorry they would be at Goldsike soon. A faint cool wind began to blow down the valley, and Kirstine's glance searched the lonely heights where grey vapour tossed.

"A bleak country, Jim! Stark is perhaps the word. Do you think you'll like it?"

"I have known a bleaker, particularly when a blizzard raged," Jim replied.

"Oh, well, you are a Goldsike Railton and a frontiersman. Since you do not spring from a soft stock, I expect your luck is good. The fellsiders are a stark lot, and in order to live at the dalehead you must be stark. Unless, of course, you're rich."

"I am not at all rich," Jim rejoined.

Big drops splashed the road and Kirstine smiled.

"We mustn't philosophize. The important thing is to get home, and since you were a cowboy I dare say you can persuade the pony to move."

XII

THE FOX'S BINK

SOON after Jim was at the tea-shop Kirstine returned to her home, but as a rule he met her when he transacted his uncle's business at the little town. They did not plan the meetings. The time for Jim's visits was fixed by the routine at the farm and the closing of the bank; Firth's house was but a mile off and when the afternoon was fine Kirstine went to the library.

Nothing lover-like marked their talk. Although Kirstine sometimes was friendly, Jim yet sensed the queer animosity he had at first remarked, and sometimes they jarred. On the whole, she disturbed him, but when he did not see her he was annoyed. He acknowledged himself ridiculous. To bother about a girl who did not pretend to like you was absurd. Moreover, he imagined his cultivating Kirstine Firth excited the townspeople's curiosity and his uncle was informed; but he was independent and their speculations did not interest him.

She one day presented him to her father. Railton had called Firth a shyster; Jim saw an urbane gentleman whose look was yet youthful and whose clothes were fastidiously neat. For all that, when one studied the fellow, one noted the lines about his eyes and the rather florid colour of his skin, and wondered whether indulgence had not something to do with it. Firth, rather casually, invited him to his house, and when Jim stated that

his occupation made visiting awkward, he politely agreed.

He met her brother, looking for grouse on the Goldsike moor. The grouse were not plentiful, Frank's dog was badly trained, and Jim soon saw he was a bad and careless shot. He, however, did not dislike the young fellow, and he helped him find some grouse, which he missed. He knew him slack, and although he did not bother to learn to shoot, his carrying an expensive London gun perhaps was typical.

All the same, Frank was good-humoured. Jim reckoned he would sooner be kind than shabby, so long as kindness did not cost him much. Not the sort to trust with an awkward job, but he was, at all events, an amiable slacker.

In the meantime, Jim was strenuously occupied, and the wet summer melted in a wetter fall. Between the showers they carried the light corn stooks from the fields down the dale, and fern for cattle-bedding from the moor. They watched the *heaf* for trespassing sheep, drained a wet pasture, and mended broken dykes. The horseman and shepherds acknowledged young Jim a good workman and a canny lad. In the dales, canny does not imply cunning, and when he half-consciously began to seize control nobody grumbled. Moreover, all knew old Jim watched his nephew and approved. Only the cowman sometimes was moody. Richards was Railton's oldest servant; a queer, sullen, but competent fellow, and as far as possible Jim left him alone.

Kirstine and he one bleak afternoon occupied the table by the tea-shop window. Nobody else was about, for the tourists had vanished like the butterflies. The window steamed, a motor bus, splashing water, forged noisily across the square, and rain beat the glass. For a minute or two Kirstine had said nothing and Jim speculated about his journey up the dale. Before

he got home dark would fall, and to drive the pony through the flood where a beck crossed the road might be hard.

"Summer is gone," said Kirstine. "I don't know if you properly value my society, but for some time you must go without. In a day or two I start for town."

Jim looked up. Kirstine's hard smile baffled him.

"London?" he said. "Are you stopping for long?"

"In England, town is London. If you knew the others, you might understand. Anyhow, I do not see myself going happily to a city of the North. I shall stop as long as possible. Unless, of course, my hosts are obviously fatigued."

Jim did not know if he was sorry, but when she was gone his excursions to the bank would be drearier. He cogitated and Kirstine laughed.

"When I am forced to return, we might resume our pleasant afternoons. Since you are a stranger, you perhaps do not see the allusion, but you will agree that our meetings are marked by a sort of Sunday calm. Well, I will not engage to write to you."

"You reckon to be much more usefully occupied?"

"I reckon you would not be interested. I will not force you to pretend. My frivolous exploits would frankly bore you. You have not much use for *laidkers*, and as for young women—— If you are honest, you'll agree that you are happier with your sheep. After all, I dare say they are less perplexing."

Jim gave her an indulgent smile. Kirstine's habit was to talk like that.

"It's possible. The sheep support me, and I undertook to earn my pay."

Kirstine got up, and when they were in the street she gave him her hand.

"Good-bye, Jim. When I hear the wind and rain

on a gloomy day, I'll picture you in the bogs ; but before I again disturb your calm I expect some time will go."

She signalled a splashing motor bus and Jim went for his digby. His emotions were rather mixed, but he was vaguely conscious of something like relief.

A day or two afterwards, when he and Hodson were on the fell one morning, Frank Firth joined them.

"Are you harbouring stray foxes at Goldsike ? " he inquired.

"Not willingly. But why do you ask ? " said Jim.

Frank laughed. "I met a Nethersceugh fellow with a bicycle and a gun, and he wanted to know if I had seen a fox. I admitted I had, six months since, when the young lambs were about."

"Nobody could push a bicycle across the soft spots in the bog. Then, if the fellow was sober, he would not expect a fox to come down the dalehead in daylight."

"He carried the bicycle ; the gun was fastened along a tube by binder twine. He was grimly sober, and so to speak out for blood. A d——t fox had raided his henhouse and carried off aw t' pultry. Fowteen, I think, and they found where he'd beeried five or six behind t' dyke."

"In summer we move the henhouses into the fields, and I've known a fox bury fowls he presumably could not eat," Hodson said to Jim. "A strong hill fox will sometimes go eight or nine miles from home at night, and it's possible the brute's headquarters is the bink by the Goldsike beck."

"Now you have puzzled Jim," Frank remarked. "If he's willing to squander useful time on sport, we might look up the fox in the afternoon."

"*Bink* perhaps is bench," said Hodson. "A terrace on a crag, a precipitous bank of stones, and the caves and tunnels underneath. As a rule, it's an awkward

spot, and sometimes you lose a terrier. But what about the excursion?"

Jim agreed to join them, and in the afternoon they followed the beck to a gloomy ravine. The sky was dark, and when they took a sheep-path up the ghyll thin rain began to fall. Across the stream, the bank for three or four yards was cracked worn rock, and then stones, cemented by red clay, went up for forty or fifty feet to the thick, black peat at the top. On Jim's side, the sheep-path curved along a precipitous gravel bank. As one went up, the ravine got shallower, and at its end, where the beck forked, a crag, thrust out between the streams like a giant buttress, supported the bogs above.

Mist floated about the rock, which was not perpendicular. After the first thirty or forty feet, its front inclined, and Jim saw broken terraces and a gully blocked by large, jammed stones. He could not see the top, because the pitch was uneven and the higher rocks cut his view.

For a few moments Hodson cogitated. He carried a rock-climber's rope, and Frank a gun, but they had not a terrier. To bolt a hill fox is a quarryman's job, and all they wanted was to find out if the fox was at the bink.

"The hole in the rocks, a short distance back, was the adit of your grandfather's mine," Hodson said to Jim. "A path of a sort follows the beck's left fork, but the ground at the top is soft. On the whole, I think the *rake* the best line to the bink, although two or three years have gone since I went up."

Firth put his gun in the driest corner he could find, and they tied on the rope, and scrambling up a bank of stones, reached a narrow, uneven ledge that obliquely crossed the front of the crag. The stone was wet, but Hodson indicated the proper holds, and at one awkward spot jammed the shortened rope round a block.

"Safety first is a useful rule, but when I was last at the bink we had not a rope and a quarryman carried a pick across," he said. "Anyhow, if you keep your shoulder to the rock, the traverse oughtn't to bother you."

The difficulty was, for three or four yards, the *rake* was sharply inclined from the crag, and Jim, at the middle of the rope, heard a stone crash behind him. When he turned his head he saw Frank had stopped. His hand was in a crack, and Jim thought his skin was wet by sweat. Then Hodson, balancing easily, gave the other a searching glance.

"One doesn't *jump* on a loose block. When nothing else is between you and the bottom, it's rash."

"I certainly did not jump, and I didn't know the stone was loose," Frank rejoined in an unsteady voice.

"Since you might step on another, there's the trouble, my lad. In fact, we mustn't risk it. If you shift your other hand to the crack, and pivot on your left foot, you'll turn safely. When he's round, you will move back, Jim."

Frank hesitated, but he awkwardly scrambled round, and for a few moments they went back down the *rake*. Then Hodson stopped them.

"The going is now easy, Frank. You might throw off the rope."

"Then, you are not coming down? And I'm sacked?"

"Something like that," Hodson agreed with a smile. "It looks as if you are not quite up to your proper form. Why you are not, we mustn't inquire, but I expect one must pay for one's popularity in town."

"One pays for living like a hermit in your mildewed bogs," Frank rejoined, and then, although his face was red, he laughed. "On a balance, I expect to get more from life than you will ever get. In the

meantime, I suppose you're logical, and I'll get off your blasted rope."

He went down the *rake*, and Jim and Hodson resumed the climb. The shelf stopped at a spot where the rock had broken away, and they went up its front to another shelf. In a hollow where some muddy soil rested Jim saw the mark of small feet.

"A sheep!" he said.

"A Herdwick, I expect. The little brutes' proper home is in the lake-country crags, and they are plucky climbers, although their horizontal length must embarrass them."

"Yes," said Jim, "ours is perpendicular, and we can turn at a narrow spot. But a fox cannot."

"Quite sound," Hodson agreed. "Sometimes a fox, pushed by the hunt off the line he knows, gets crag-fast, and now and then one plunges to his death. In the hills, of course, you follow hounds on foot, but as a rule we do not use a pack. When the lambs begin to vanish, we search the binks with a terrier, a pickaxe, and a gun."

Jim's breath was rather laboured, and throwing the coiled rope between two blocks, he sat down. Thin rain blew across the crag, but to some extent he was sheltered by the rock at his back. All one could see was the dark, wet bank of the ravine and a ledge that broke off a few yards below one's feet.

"I wonder where the sheep went," he said. "If it is a Herdwick, it's a trespasser from Staneghyll, because we have not many and I know where they are. In a way, I suppose, you had to send Frank down."

"He admitted I was logical," said Hodson with a smile. "Frank will not brood about it. His drawbacks are pretty obvious, but he is not revengeful. In fact, I think him the best——"

He stopped, and Jim reflected that sometimes one talked about the best of the bunch. Wat perhaps was nearly indiscreet.

"The young fella' is not at all a hermit," he resumed. "From his point of view, it's possible he gets more from life than we can get in the dark bogs; but you are forced to pay, and I reckon Frank has not met all the bill. Anyhow, you cannot be an up-to-date young blood and a mountaineer."

They resumed the climb. At one side, the rock went up steeply; below the shelf, cracked slabs slanted down for three or four yards and vanished. Hodson said some stones had fallen since he was there before, but when they reached a corner he indicated the line to the bink would be easy. Jim used some caution, for the rock at his side got nearly upright, and he reckoned the bottom of the crag, which he could not see, was twenty yards off. Hodson vanished round the corner and shouted in a warning voice. Jim reached the spot and stopped.

Between him and a sort of buttress supporting a pile of tumbled blocks, plunging stones had smashed the shelf, and for two or three yards there was nothing in front but nearly perpendicular rock. Hodson, on his knees, held down a small exhausted sheep. The sheep did not move; the rain was beaded, like dew on grass, in its draggled wool; its eyes were dully fixed on the man.

"Starving," said Hodson. "Followed the ledge and could not turn; sheep do get trapped like that. However, you might pull off the rope; I rather think it will reach the bottom. The sheep, of course, was trespassing."

"One of Stoddart's lot," Jim agreed. "All the same, it's entitled to a chance for its life. What's your plan?"

"A bowline behind the forelegs, I think. I see a

block round which the rope might run. But I want the end under its body."

Jim moved one knee a few inches down the wet slab, and began to push the rope under the greasy wool. The sheep was quiet; he thought it exhausted by hunger, and as a rule, a sheep firmly seized does not struggle. He, however, could use but one hand, and by and by he was forced to move his knee.

His boot slipped from a knob, and when his leg went down his hand came off the rock. The other hand was under the sheep and he could find no hold on the smooth stone. He was going down the slab, and two or three yards below him it stopped. If he went over, he would plunge to the bottom of the crag.

Hodson said nothing. He was on his knees, and he let go the sheep. For a large man, his movements were fast and his hand closed firmly on the collar of Jim's coat. Jim's body went flat against the slab and Hodson's face got red.

"Use your toes," he gasped.

Jim's boot touched a crack. Hodson lifted cautiously; he was not firmly anchored and for him to go down the rock would not help. Jim's hand shifted along the shelf and stopped where he thought his fingers would for a moment bear his weight. He must not pull Hodson down, but when his knee found a sort of hollow, he set his mouth, pushed himself up strongly, and was on the ledge. The sheep had not moved at all, and he thought it knew they tried to help.

"Thanks!" he gasped. "If you have not had enough, we'll finish the job."

Hodson nodded; he knew the Railton vein. He lifted the animal's front legs, and Jim, jammed against the rock, knotted the bowline and pushed the woolly body gently off the ledge. The rope ran across the block and stopped when but two or three feet were left.

"Bottom, I think," said Hodson. "Anyhow we'll thrown down the end and start for the *rake*. Watch your step. The stones are getting wet."

They reached the bottom, and following the crag's foot, found the sheep. When they loosed the knot it got on its feet, staggered awkwardly for a few yards, and lay down. For a minute or two they waited, and then the sheep again got up, and moving faster, vanished behind the rocks. Hodson looked about and laughed.

"A Herdwick is remarkably hard to kill. Well, Frank is gone, the rain is thicker, and I think we'll start for home."

XIII

LAIKERS

FOR seven or eight days the sun shone and a dry east wind swept the moors. The corn was housed, the lambs were drafted out and sold, the cattle were in the byres, and at length one had time for the odd jobs that must be carried out before winter began. Railton, persuaded by his doctor, had gone to a northern spa, but before he went he delegated his authority to Jim.

After breakfast one morning Jim started for the fell. Wilson, the shepherd, had gone up sooner and imagined they would be engaged until dark, but for a few minutes Jim stopped at the stable. There was not much level ground at the dalehead, and the old building was on a flat across the beck, over which a narrow bridge carried the road from the yard.

The stones had been taken from the stream and bedded, without cutting, in thick lime, but after frost and rain for a hundred years, the mortar had perhaps got soft, for a crack had recently opened in the gable end. Since the roof was laid with heavy slabs and it looked as if the oak beams might push out the cracked wall, Railton had sent for a builder, who had brought up some material. Scaffold poles and thick posts for shores were stacked in the grass, and Jim understood the foreman might arrive in the afternoon. While he studied the gable end, the byreman crossed the bridge.

Richards knew much about cattle, but he was obstinate, and Jim had some grounds to think he resented

and at about three o'clock the shepherd went downhill with the flock. Jim and his dog pushed on across the moor.

At length he came down by the Goldsike beck and the crag he and Hodson had climbed. The rain was now heavy and got worse. Water drained from his mackintosh, mist floated about the rocks, and in the gloomy ravine the sheep-path was indistinct twenty yards off. Jim noted that the beck was coming down; its turmoil struck an angrier note. He reckoned the time about four o'clock, but he ought to be home by dark.

By and by Grey Lad barked, and then after running back to meet him, again started down the ghyll. The dog had remarked something he thought his master ought to know, and Jim hoped another sheep did not need his help. At the lower end of the ravine, the old mine adit opened in the rocks, and he saw two people sheltered at the dark tunnel's mouth. Following the dog, he scrambled to the spot.

Two bulky, wet rucksacks were on the ground, and a young fellow, smoking a cigarette, occupied a block that had fallen from the roof. On the other side, a girl on a broken pitprop ate a sandwich. She had pulled off her wet hat and rain-drops beaded her brown, curling hair. Her belted coat was dark with rain, and yellow moss and peat soil stained her puttee leggings. Jim noted that she was not dressed like, and did not look like, a man. In fact, he thought she looked like an attractive girl. The young fellow was rather muddy, and although his face was red, his neck and wrists were white.

Walking tourists, but Jim knew them different from the rather helpless *laikers* he sometimes found entangled in the bogs. The girl's boots were thick, and he noted the marks of clamp nails in the wet moss. Then the rucksacks and pike sticks had been used before.

"I hope my dog did not bother you," he

"Not at all. I expect he barked because he ter from
he ought, but it looks as if he is willing to be f I know
the girl replied.

She held out her sandwich and the dog ad s. Jim
Jim remarked that he did not hesitate. Gr girl.
manners were good and he gently took the pie ising,"
her firm hand, and when it vanished pushed
head against her knee.

"Since that's the last, we cannot be hosp carried
but I can give you a cigarette," the young m knees.
to Jim. and a
and it

Jim took a cigarette and sat down on a rusty eam,
axle. A few yards behind him, the crumbling water
melted in the dark; in front, big drops splas some-
pool and slanted rain swept the ghyll. top.

"The weather gets worse. My sister began to hind
a rest, and we thought we'd stop for half an ho from
the hope that the clouds might break," the y
man resumed.

"The trouble is, you might stop for a month," ther.
m. old

"You are not much of an optimist," remarked wo

"begin to be a dalesman," Jim rejoined. "I a
might inquire, where are you from?" nk

told him and he calculated. Twenty mi m.
wet heather, over high Langrig, where bl m
am the peat, and across the soft flow behi ra
ugh. Moreover, until they made the mar its
was not an inn.

s r is the proper time for a fellside walk," ly,
he

We were forced to wait," said the man. ed
have a job on the Manchester Exchange and ag
not get away, and my sister was needed at the ir-
works. However, if the rain is not going to stop, ed

and at abo push on." He turned to the girl. "Buck with the ce! I hope our next stop's an inn." the moorot up and when Jim seized her rucksack she

At leng him with a smile. He liked the quiet smile and the crag oved her old Puritan name. When they went now heane stones to the water-side her balance was good, mackint knew her tired and after they had ploughed gloomy the bank for a few minutes he stopped. The yards ofwas coming down faster, and an angry turmoil its turnrd the ledges and revolved in the deep potholes. timeab/e must get across, and I don't know a better

By a he said. "There is a bridge at Goldsike, two back tcee miles off, but if we keep this side of the water, dog hanust climb an awkward scree."

ought e young fellow looked about. The rain was like need laking, filmy curtain, behind which a bank of old mherous stones went up vaguely. Close at hand, peopleæck swirled round a boulder three or four feet ing th a ledge. One could reach its top, but from the

Twto the other bank was at least two yards. a yo- At the end of the march, the scree's unthinkable," that said and threw his rucksack across. "Some of your a girff's inside, Grace, and you have got to follow your pullehes."

curlifhe girl jumped to the boulder; Jim in the water, yelløve her his hand. Her brother studied the leaping Jim od.

look" Do you think you could swing over on your pike an ck?"

mud" The stick is too short. If I was fresh, I might wisnp. I suppose I must try."

WJim thought her pluck was good, but she was not fronsh, and while she braced herself Grey Lad took the entater. His plunge did not carry him to the bank and and eddy pulled him down. His head broke the surface, mosd although he fronted up stream, he went backwards usecer a shelf and round a revolving pool. Ten yards

off, he made the bank, and shaking the water from his hair, vanished in the stones.

"Jump," said Jim to the young man. "I know the ground and I'll help your sister."

The other splashed, and floundered across. Jim threw him the stick and sack and seized the girl.

"You mustn't be squeamish. The water's rising," he said.

He turned obliquely up stream. Since he carried a load, the current must not get behind his knees. Rolling gravel struck his boots, he staggered and a wave broke near his waist. His hat was gone and it looked as if he and the girl would go down stream, but he found the ledge for which he felt and the water was back at his knees. There was a big stone somewhere, and the white turmoil no doubt marked its top. For a yard, he pushed up stream in the slack behind the stone, and made the bank. The girl slipped from his arms and he saw she had got his hat.

"Thank you," he gasped and turned to her brother. "The evening will be very dark. I doubt if you could make the town."

"We are not keen to try. Our map marks two or three houses at the dalehead, and sometimes a farmer's wife boards summer tourists. Do you think we could get shelter for the night?"

"I think I can engage to see you fixed," said Jim.

The other's satisfaction was obvious, but Jim pondered. To receive the strangers implied extra labour, and when work stopped Railton's servants were entitled to rest. Rooms must be got ready, and the girl's perhaps ought to have a fire. The housekeeper's rule was firm; old Jim acknowledged Mrs. Hope competent and never meddled. Young Jim imagined she had not much use for *laikers*, particularly when all they wore was wet. Yet he hoped she would not let him down.

In the meantime, he steered them along an awkward sheep-path, and at length when the light was going, the bare sycamores and roofs at Goldsike loomed in the rain. The young man glanced about the courtyard and hesitated.

"The farm is not the sort of farm at which they bother about soaked excursionists. I expect our prospective hosts will rather admire our nerve!"

"Your sister's tired. Come in," said Jim.

He pushed back the kitchen door. A brass lamp hung from a crooked oak beam, a fire of wood and peat burned in the high grate, and red copper and polished steel shone. Two brown-skinned men smoked their pipes in a corner, and when the strangers advanced hardly turned their heads. The rosy kitchen-maid's curiosity was, at all events, not marked, and the tall, straight old woman who got up gave Jim a calm, inquiring glance.

"The rain is pretty fierce, Mrs. Hope, and the lady has come over the Langrig," he said. "I felt we could not allow her to go down the dale to-night."

"She'll likely be tired," the housekeeper remarked.

She turned to the girl, and Jim admitted something like relief. His guests occupied the middle of the floor. Grace's face was rather white and her pose was slack. Water drained from her coat, and wet splashes on the flags marked her track from the door. Fronting the old woman, she gave her an apologetic smile.

"I really am rather tired."

"I will show you your room," said Mrs. Hope. "The gentleman will go next to you, Mr. Jim. As soon as they have changed their clothes I will send in supper."

That was all. Mrs. Hope was competent, and Jim carried off his guest and when the candles were lighted, rolled into the room a flat, circular bath about four feet across.

"The thing is fifty years old, but we haven't another, and I myself use the beck," he said.

Somebody tapped on the door, and the housemaid said :

"Hot water's on mat ; but, please, he mustn't splash."

Jim laughed. His guest glanced at the polished boards and sheepskin rugs.

"Do you think I might risk it ? But I begin to be embarrassed—— You might recollect my remark about our nerve."

"Go ahead while the water's hot," said Jim. "Since I expect your *sark* is wet, you'll find some fresh stuff on t' mat."

Ten minutes afterwards, he went downstairs. Mrs. Hope had banished the two men, and when Jim asked where they were she gave him a thoughtful glance.

"Richards is in engine house," she said.

Jim saw she knew whom he wanted ; she perhaps knew why he wanted the byreman. The moorside folk were discreet, but they certainly were not dull, and somehow he imagined Mrs. Hope would approve his being firm.

Richards sat on a box by the little oil engine. A belt from the shaft-pulley went through the wall, and since the engine had not long stopped running, the room was warm. When Jim came in, the other dropped on the flags a match with which he had lighted his pipe. Jim wondered whether his carelessness was studied.

"I suppose I mustn't grumble about your smoking, but the oil is rather near the spot where you threw the match," he said.

"Floor's stone, and the plug in oil-drum is screwed fast."

"I have found it loose," said Jim. "Anyhow, you might step on the match."

Richards removed his pipe and pressed down the

tobacco. He did not move his foot and the match burned out. The ground for a dispute was gone, but Jim reckoned the fellow knew another.

"Did the builder's man arrive?"

"He was here in afternoon and he browt a labourer."

Jim smiled, a crooked smile. Richards meant him to open the attack, but he began to know the dalesfolk and he must be sure an attack was justified.

"Then I suppose they put up the posts and shores?"

"They did not. Posts would be in horse-man's road, and we 'greed that wall would stand until they were ready to get to work. Besides, master will soon be back."

The implication was obvious. Richards did not acknowledge Jim boss; moreover unless he was firm, the others might not.

"So long as it was left alone, the wall might stand, but I believe you have had two or three feet of water in the stable, and the beck is rising. At daybreak you'll yoke the pony and go for the builders. The posts must be fixed."

"To drive pony is horse-man's job."

"I'm sending you," said Jim. "When Mr. Railton is not about my orders go."

For a moment or two Richards said nothing. His look was inscrutable and his eyes were fixed on Jim's rather red face. Then he said, coolly:

"I have lang worked for your uncle and he kens what I'm worth. Pay's good, but I can get a job where I want. If I must go for builders, Railton will need a fresh byreman at Martinmas."

Jim thought he did not exaggerate; Richards was a good byreman, but he himself must refuse to superintend where rebellion was allowed. Then, although his uncle might support him, the old fellow would have some grounds to be annoyed. Well sometimes one must take a dare.

"You are a first-class workman," he said in a quiet voice. "It's possible you can get a softer job, but if you are satisfied at Goldsike, to bluff is rash. If you hand me your notice, you quit at Martinmas."

Richards gave him a queer look.

"My notice is for my master," he said, and Jim went off.

XIV

STORM-STAYED

JIM stood by the fireplace, where ash blocks flamed in the red peat. An oil-lamp with a glass bowl on top of a tall brass pillar occupied the middle of the table, and the light sparkled on good china, and silver Jim had not seen before. Since the knobs on the teapot and hot-water jug were little silver sheep, Jim imagined the set a prize Railton had carried off at an agricultural show. Although the lamp was tall, a shade concentrated the illumination on the polished oak, and outside the bright circle the room was dim.

The strangers came in, and when the girl's glance searched the room Jim looked up quietly. A touch of colour flickered in her face and went, and he knew he must not smile. She was not tall and now she wore something like evening clothes, her figure was rather smoothly round than boyish. She carried her look well, and her hair and eyes were brown. The rather black clothes were not conspicuously fashionable ;

"I imagined one did not pack expensive stuff in a I'm vsack, but nothing was crumpled. In fact, he wanted a sort of harmonious neatness he thought, for fresh of a better word, Quakerish. Anyhow, the picture Jim was attractive and afterwards haunted him.

a good/e must apologize. My brother rather forced intend invite us to your house," she said. "his uncht is so," the young man agreed. "You see, have somot imagine—— That is to say, all we wanted one must'

His sister stopped him and her eyes twinkled.

"Mark, as you have perhaps some grounds to think, is not discreet," she said to Jim.

"I'm Lancastrian," said Mark. "I don't know if polished discretion is particularly cultivated at Manchester; but you ought to know who we are. My sister is Grace Atherton, and I am Mark. My job is on the Cotton Exchange; she is a soapworks chemist. However, all that's important is, we were not long since half-drowned *laikers*, and pushed ourselves on to your hospitality."

"The house is my uncle's, but when he is not about I'm expected to deputize, and he would not have allowed you to go down the dale in the dark," Jim replied. "He is James Railton, o' Goldsike. I am young Jim, and, to some extent, Albertan. At present I am being tried out for his superintendent's post."

Grace had noted something in his talk that was not altogether English, but now she studied him, she felt he was not a foreigner in the austere yet somehow friendly room. She knew him muscular and athletic; he had carried her across the flooded beck. Now he smiled, his smile was frank and kind; and yet his direct glance was marked by a sort of calm that might cover controlled force. For all his claim to be Canadian, his type was the old thin-faced type that when Cumbria was Strathclyde sprang from the union of Briton and Dane. Moreover, she thought Jim Railton thoroughbred.

Mrs. Hope and the rosy servant carried in supper, and for some time Grace was occupied by the tea service and her frank appetite. Afterwards, Jim gave her a big easy chair and Mark a cigarette. Grace knew the cigarette; one could buy a packet at any village shop. She did not see Jim Railton fastidiously selecting his tobacco, but she noted with a touch of amusement that he did not give her a cigarette, although

his putting the tin box in her reach was perhaps meant to indicate that if she did smoke, the cigarettes were there. As a rule, she did not, particularly when young men were about.

Rain beat the glass and the beck's turmoil pierced the thick walls.

"When we met you our luck was good," she said. "I begin to doubt if I could have gone much farther in the storm and dark."

"Oh, well, I hope our housekeeper was able to give you all you wanted."

"She was willing to give me more than I could use. One can pack a quantity of modern clothes in a good rucksack, and Mark's business was to carry the stuff that overflowed. Then in Lancashire I do not get a fire in my bedroom. Mrs. Hope is a remarkably kind old lady."

"She's stanch and competent," said Jim, with faint surprise. "I dare say she felt she, so to speak, must play up for the honour of the house. Then she, no doubt, approved her guests. In a way, you see, you are her guests. Anyhow, Mrs. Hope is boss."

"And you think that's all? Then I will risk telling you something: she played up for you."

"I wonder——" said Jim, in a thoughtful voice. "I'm recently from Canada, and it looks as if I don't yet know these folks. To some extent, they are my folk, and I oughtn't to be puzzled, but their reserve baffles me. But, if you are right, you're keen."

"And you, perhaps, are modest?" Grace rejoined. "Well, modesty is attractive and might not be much of a drawback, on a farm."

Jim imagined she bantered him, but he did not know. Her voice was quiet and her look demure; he thought demure the proper word. She talked with a sort of old-fashioned preciseness. If one could pic-

ture a humorous Puritan ; but Jim reckoned the Puritans were not a humorous lot.

"Grace is really keener than some people think," her brother remarked. "At the soapworks one is expected to cultivate businesslike soberness ; and then, of course, she is rather embarrassed by her name. If I'd had another sister, she'd have been Prudence, and my father was Mark. The rule, no doubt, began when Methodism, like a flood, swept industrial Lancashire."

"I do not imagine Mr. Railton is much interested," said Grace.

She turned her head and Jim looked up. Rain lashed the window and the beck was ominously loud. But for Richards' stubbornness, the stable wall would be safely shored, and it began to look as if Jim himself must fix the props. Anyhow, he must wait for morning, and in the meantime he was not going to worry. The girl's voice was soothing ; by contrast with the black dress, her skin was silky smooth and white. To glance at her was restful, and somehow she touched the room with tranquil, homelike charm.

She had not Kirstine's vivid beauty, and she was not, like Helen, tall and proud ; but Kirstine disturbed him, and Helen, after exciting his rash ambition, had married Steve. Jim frowned. To contrast three attractive young women was invidious, and he hoped he was not a fool. At all events, he had not the qualities he imagined marked a successful philanderer.

"The chair is rather high. Would you like a rest for your foot ?" he said. "If the fire is hot, I can give you a sheep-dip advertisement card for a hand screen."

"No, thanks," said Grace. "After a long day on the hills, I believe I'm as happy as a rather tired girl could hope to be. If you knew my Lancashire lodgings, you might sympathize with my liking your noble room."

"I like the old house, but I imagined a city girl might think it gloomy. It certainly is not up-to-date."

"Grace is not altogether up-to-date," Atherton remarked. "On the Cotton Exchange you must try to shove along a little in front of the crowd. At a soapworks you can perhaps be romantic, although if you saw, and smelt the spot, you might doubt."

"Walking tourists are not numerous at the dale-head. Is not the lake country their favourite haunt?"

"It is not ours," said Grace. "So long as you keep the rocks, the big hills are majestic, but in the evening you must come down."

Atherton laughed. "There's the drawback. You do not come home at evening where all quiet things abide. In fact, when you hear the blatant sharries you might think you were in the Strand."

"I expect that is so," Jim agreed. "Well, Goldsike is not famous, and I expect Swinset bank would baffle a motor 'bus. But I liked the lines from which you quote."

"'Mixed with cloud and wind and river
Sun-distilled in dew and rain——'"

said Grace in a quiet voice. "There's the charm of the North, Mr. Railton, and it is not always dark. Perhaps you are lucky because you have come home and need not go forth again. In the morning we must take the road for the sooty mills."

When his guests went off to bed, Jim stopped for a time and mused by the fire. Because he was at Goldsike a city girl thought him lucky! Well, perhaps his luck was good, and he had begun to feel he had come home.

The Athertons did not start in the morning. When Mrs. Hope served breakfast, the barns across the courtyard were indistinct in the rain. Soon afterwards a shepherd stated that the water was on dale road, and

Jim, with his housekeeper's support, refused to let his visitors go. Atherton admitted he was not forced to start, and Grace that she had saved a day or two in order that she might visit with a college friend at the market town. Since the floods might stop the pony, there was no use in Jim's sending Richards for the builders and he called the men to the stable. Grace and her brother went with him, and Atherton studied the cracked gable end.

"The wall is rather like a castle wall," he said. "I do not, of course, pretend to be an expert antiquarian or an architect."

"My brother is modest," Grace remarked. "He is really a yarn broker's clerk."

"For all that, I have prowled about some old churches and Border towers, and by my sister's leave, I will go ahead. A thin wall is a job for a good workman, and in consequence, primitive builders, so to speak, used mass. Some did not reflect that you need a solid foundation to carry a mass, and I believe the Normans were the worst. Am I accurate, Grace?"

"I am a soapworks chemist," Grace rejoined. "All I know is, in the cathedral at Mr. Railton's county town you can see where the round Norman arches have gone askew. The Normans, however, did not build his stable."

Atherton gave Jim a smile.

"We mustn't bore you, but the conclusion is, your foundation's bad. Peat is, no doubt, compressible, particularly when it's wet, and I expect a modern architect would order you to cut down to the rock."

Jim knitted his brows. He had thought himself a pretty good workman, but it looked as if the cotton broker's clerk knew something about building.

"Oh, well," he said, "I'll be satisfied to prop up the roof until the experts arrive."

They got to work. All were willing, and so far as

Jim could see, Richards pulled his proper weight, but none knew much about his job. Then the steep-pitched roof was high, for at one time the thick cross-beams had carried a hay-mow floor. Jim cut and fixed some scaffold poles between the purlins and the beams, and wedged props underneath. Then he sunk shore-posts in the ground outside and jammed their upper ends against the cracked wall. He admitted the props would be awkward for the horse-man, but when Mrs. Hope called the group for dinner he was on the whole satisfied.

For a minute or two he pondered and watched the brown flood swirl under the bridge. The rain perhaps was lighter and the beck had not risen as fast as he had thought; then Wilson declared the water had reached the stable but twice in ten years. He might put back the horses. The pastures were flooded, he would sooner not drag the new binder and some other expensive machines from the cart bay, and he did not want to turn out the animals on the bleak fell, particularly since the two Clydesdale mares had not yet been separated from their foals.

"What do you think about it, Bill?" he asked.

"Beck will not gan much higher," the horse-man replied. "She comes doon fast, but watter soon gets away."

Another agreed, and Jim turned to Richards, who was longest at the farm.

"I'm byreman and have nowt t' do with horses. When master's away, you're boss."

They brought back the horses, and Mrs. Hope was forced to wait for dinner. In the afternoon Jim and the Athertons were for some time in the byre and dairy. He had thought they would soon be bored, but the shining separators, coolers, and power churns interested Grace, and she somehow persuaded the shy dairymaid to allow her to experiment. Jim imagined Miss Ather-

ton would soon know all he knew about butter-making, and Mrs. Hope declared she had the proper touch. As a rule, the housekeeper did not rashly commend.

In the dim, warm byre, Grace pushed fearlessly into the stalls, where the big white-and-red milkers tossed their heads and munched. Sometimes when one breathed like a grampus her hand touched its neck and she talked in a low, soothing voice. A black Angus pushed out a large, moist tongue that covered her fingers, but she did not draw back. Since the stalls were narrow Jim thought she might be crushed, and he jumped. Grace coolly pushed across the cow.

"I begin to think you have had enough," he said. "When you are through, you will need a clothes-brush, and since you're not built like a dalesman, you mustn't get between a heavy animal and a hard oak beam."

Grace gave him a smile.

"The big, gentle creatures would not hurt me. I believe they know when one trusts them. As a rule, when an animal is savage, it's afraid."

"Looks as if some know whom they can trust," Jim agreed. "Perhaps it's strange, but in the morning I wondered whether you'd be bored."

"I expect you were rather daunted," Grace rejoined. "You had two city excursionists on your hands for a long wet day. I dare say you really wondered what you would do with us. Well, the day is nearly gone, and it has gone happily. After Lancashire, I begin to think Goldsike the sort of spot where only quiet things abide."

Jim pulled out his watch. "By George, four o'clock! Mrs. Hope is brewing tea and she doesn't like to wait. However, we have yet the evening. I suppose you could not stop for another day?"

"You are kind," said Atherton. "However, if I am not at the office by the time fixed, I risk getting sacked, and in the circumstances I must be firm."

Salesmen, you see, are numerous, but jobs are not. Then Grace engaged to look up a woman doctor pal who has something to do with public welfare at your market town."

Mrs. Hope served tea in the panelled room. The clouds had begun to break, but mist hid the fell tops, and almost before one knew, the light began to go. An old upright piano occupied a corner, and when Jim pulled out the music stool Grace struck a few chords and nodded.

"Yes; the makers were famous, and the octave's accurate. But is your uncle a musician?"

"I should not imagine it, and I am not," said Jim. "All the same, a tuner now and then comes up the dale. The Railtons' habit is to stick to all they've got."

Grace began to play a famous nocturne. The rippling notes stole softly about the dim room, and by and by she looked up.

"Some people declare an old piano's tone is thin, but I don't know. The makers used the best material and good work stands."

"If you will go on, we will not get a light," said Jim.

Grace indulged him. His politeness was not conscious politeness; she knew him sincere. Moreover, she thought she knew the sort of music he would like. Nothing that was showy and vulgar went at quiet Goldsike, and she gave him the best that she could play, the work of classic masters who yet loved a moving tune. At all events, Jim was moved, and when she stopped and he got a light he unconsciously frowned.

Six o'clock! The evening was going, and in the morning his guests would be gone. All the same, he was his uncle's deputy, and stealing away for a few minutes, he went to the bridge. The rain was light,

and the water had not reached the arch. So far as he could distinguish, it did not rise. The turmoil was daunting, but the horse-man declared the floods soon got away.

XV

THE FLOOD

A SMALL mountain-ash sped across the beam Jim's stable lantern threw on the flood. The trunk shocked against the bridge and the branches thrashed ; then the current rolled the obstacle under the arch, and all he saw was angry water that melted in the dark a few yards up stream. The tree, however, had gone through and the flood had not yet touched the crown of the arch. In fact, it looked as if the water was but a few inches higher than when Jim was at the bridge before, two or three hours since. He might have gone to bed when the others went.

When the beck first came down, the narrow channel did not carry off the water, but by and by the current found fresh outlets across the rocks. Jim, calculating its rise since afternoon, thought it would not reach the stable for about two days. Yet twice in ten years a flood had swept the flat.

Anyhow, the rain had begun again, and large bright drops slanted past the lantern. The deluge beat the stones and spongy peat with a queer sibilant hiss that pierced the duller turmoil. The flood's roar went up two or three notes in a sort of crescendo and sank. Now its colour was coffee-brown, but the stain would soon go. For all that it crossed the peat bogs, the stream was fed by springs, and as a rule the stony pools were clear as glass. Jim had imagined some unusual quality marked the limpid Goldsike water.

He looked about. But for two windows above the

courtyard wall, the house was dark. The Athertons were going to bed, and in the morning they must take the road. When they were gone Goldsike would be lonely. For two evenings he, and he hoped his guests, had happily loafed about by the fire and talked, but after breakfast they would vanish into the rain from which they came. One did meet people who attracted one, and then disappeared for good; the other sort ere always about. Well, it was done with. The Athertons could not stop, and he must let them go and get on with his proper business.

Jim started for the house. The kitchen was dark, and only a dull gleam indicated that somebody, using crumbled peat, had *rested* the fire. He stole quietly across the flags, and pulling off his wet mackintosh, went to the dining-room. He ought to go to bed, but he lighted his pipe and began to muse, about Grace Atherton. Jim shrugged impatiently. But a week or two since he had mused about Kirstine Firth. He mustn't be ridiculous. Although playwrights and novelists exaggerated the lure of sex, a man's business was to think about his occupation.

After a time he looked up. The roar of the flood was louder, and he sensed a fresh, strident note. The noise was like the noise of the Atlantic express when she plunged down through the foothills. One heard the giant locomotive and clanging cars when they were a long way off; a swelling uproar marked their advance. Jim dropped his pipe and jumped for his boots and mackintosh. Speed was going to be important, for the noise was nearer.

As a rule in Cumberland, farm servants live at the farm, and in a few moments he was at the bottom of the stairs by which one reached the workmen's rooms. He reckoned his shouts would rouse the household, but when he knew the byreman and the shepherd were getting up he got a light and plunged into the

rain. His lantern was the tubular pattern, which can hardly be blown out.

At the courtyard gate he saw water shine between him and the bridge, but he could distinguish the parapet that followed the arch's curve and he splashed ahead. Not more than knee-deep, and if they were quick, Richards and Bob ought to get across; but Bill, the horse-man, had a separate cottage on the flat. Jim durst not go for him, and anyhow he ought to hear the flood. The important thing was to get out the horses, and when he left the bridge he plunged into something like a lake.

To force back the stable door was awkward, and he wondered whether the wall had sunk and pushed down the lintel. He got it open and found the water five or six inches deep on the cement floor. The horses stamped and snorted, and he knew them afraid. There was the trouble; because the brutes were afraid, they might refuse to leave the stable, and by contrast with a big Clydesdale, man's muscular force is small. However, if he could lead one out, the others might follow.

The stalls were not wide, and to reach the headrope by the manger was awkward. Jim's voice and touch were soothing, but the animal knew he was not its proper driver and refused to back from the stall. The water round their feet got deeper, and when a fresh wave rolled along the floor Jim felt it top his boots. At length, using force and gentleness, he pushed the horse from the stall. The door was not far off, but a post he had wedged under a beam to some extent blocked the passage, and the horse, as a horse's habit is, hesitated to front a risk it did not know.

Jim, on one side of the post, saw the animal take the other side and the rope go tight across the timber. Since he could not pull a stubborn Clydesdale round the obstacle, he let go, and the horse splashed noisily to the stable's other end. Jim followed, and after

some manœuvring turned the brute ; although he was forced to use a manure fork. The Clydesdale started the other way, and when the shining fork stopped the entrance to the stall, plunged for the door and vanished in the dark. One was out, but three more and two foals were in the stalls.

Lanterns glimmered, and Bob and Bill and Atherton arrived. Atherton stated he had firmly sent back his sister at the bridge, and he doubted if Jim could lead his horses across.

"If we can get them oot, they'll tak' the fell," said Bill. "Noo then, I'se tak' yan and Mr. Jim another. You'll follow up behind us, Bob, and push them on. Mr. Atherton can stop t' empty stalls."

For four men to move three horses looked, but was not, an easy job. The props embarrassed them, a lantern was knocked down and extinguished, and in the gloom Atherton thought the snorting Clydesdales as large as elephants. Moreover the flood got deeper and the animals were now madly afraid. They knew their stalls a refuge from cold and labour, and the daunting turmoil was outside in the dark. Jim reckoned the big mare he tried to sooth reasoned like that. At all events, she knocked him against the stall, and when at length he forced her out, lifted her shaggy forelegs as if she meant to pivot on her hind feet. Somehow he stuck to the headrope, and when her feet came down and he fell against her chest, she stubbornly backed away from him and collided with the horse Bill led.

One squealed ; both kicked and plunged. Jim was pulled off his feet and dragged about in the water. For a few moments, he did not know where he went, but when he got up, he and Bill and the horses were at the end of the stable farthest from the door, and a foal was entangled by the struggling group. Only one light yet burned, some distance off, and all was indis-

tinct. Fern bedding floated in the water that splashed Jim's knees ; his boots slipped on the greasy stones. His breath was gone and his leg hurt as if he had taken a nasty kick.

For all the noise, he thought something cracked overhead. The gable end perhaps was settling, and if the props he had fixed against the purlins went, the roof would come down. Richards was near the door, and so far as Jim could distinguish he did nothing. The fellow perhaps thought nothing was to be done. It certainly looked as if the men were conquered and must leave the horses to be crushed or drowned.

Jim refused. He did not consciously argue and weigh the risk ; he mechanically stayed with his job. Moreover, he knew the slow stubborn dalesmen would stop. But Richards began to get busy. He waved a lantern and shouted something as he advanced. His voice carried no meaning for Jim, but it looked as if Bill and the shepherd understood. At all events, they got going, and although nobody knew how they turned back the horses, the brutes at length started for the door and the foal went first.

In a few moments all were outside, and Jim let go the animal he rather followed than steered. Brown Bess and her foal were yet in the wide end stall and at any time Bess's temper was queer. He thought somebody splashed along behind him, and when he turned he saw Atherton. Mark looked as if he had got out of a muddy bath, and crushed fern stuck to his stained, dripping clothes. Jim admitted the cotton salesman's nerve was good.

"You were not forced to join the gang," he said.

Atherton laughed. "Oh, well, when the market broke I've known something like a rough-house on the Exchange. Then did you ever watch a rugger scrimmage and not feel you ought to be in it ? I

mustn't claim my getting knocked down is useful, but my object is good."

"You're a sport," said Jim. "Just now you are looking for trouble, but if I can shove Bess out, you might see she does not get back. You mustn't touch her foal."

The end stall was a sort of loose box, and the big mare snorted and nervously splashed about. Ather-ton noted her massive hindquarters and the huge shaggy foot she lifted from the water. Jim went into the stall. He had reckoned on trouble, but perhaps his steady voice soothed the high-strung foal, for when he pushed it back it moved obediently. Bess turned her head. Her wrinkled lip yet covered her teeth; her ears were alertly cocked. Well, so long as they were not flat, she might, perhaps, be trusted. Jim reflected that you never knew Bess's moods, and when his firm hand touched her neck she followed him from the stall.

In the passage, Bill stepped back. Jim and the big horse and foal occupied the gangway, and so long as Bess went willingly, none must meddle. The thing was strange; but young Jim had a way with horses.

At the door Bess hesitated, and now she could not turn back Jim indulged her. He thought a misty twinkle marked the bridge, and he heard the rippling flood beat the gable wall. The other horses had vanished and had, no doubt, reached the moor. He had thought Bess would take their path, but she called her foal and started for the farm.

Jim frowned. He reckoned two or three feet of angry water swept the road to the bridge. The mare might keep the proper line, but he did not know about the foal; of all domestic animals, he thought a foal the least competent to care for itself. Anyhow, Bess was steering for the farm, he did not know where the moor path was, and he might be useful at the bridge.

The rain beat his face, the flood roared, and but for the glimmer on the arch, the night was as dark as a mine.

After a few moments, he knew the water was far up his legs. He must not front down stream, for if the current got behind his knees he could not keep his feet. The lantern was not far off, and somebody shouted. His arm was against the horse's wet shoulder, the foal was at his back, and although the flood washed about their legs, they steadily pushed ahead.

The water got shallow and but touched his boots. He was at the top of the arch, and the man who had signalled had carried off the lantern, and was now eight or nine yards off. Behind the low parapet, the current leaped tumultuously down the ghyll.

The foal stumbled, and terrified by the noise, leaped ahead. Jim seized its mane. If he could hold on and see them through the eddy at the bridge end, the brutes might go where they liked. The foal, however, was stronger than him, and for a yard or two he was dragged along; and then Bess knocked him against the wall. He staggered, his boot slipped on a wet stone, and he went over the low parapet.

The plunge steadied him, and when his head broke the surface he reflected that there ought to be a slack behind the bridge wall, and he must not go down the roaring ghyll. He could not see the wall, but a lantern shone in the rain and his arm swung forward, his crossing legs drove him ahead, and he knew he was in the eddy. It was, however, rather a whirlpool than a slack, and its revolution might throw him back into the channel. The current pulled him down and battered him against a rock. When he came up his foot touched bottom, but he could not get hold and the stream drove him against the wall. His hands slipped across the stones and found no support; he

was carried on and round the pool again like a tossing cork.

By and by he took a fresh knock, but now his sinking feet trailed across stones and he got up. The water leaped about his waist and dragged at his legs. In a moment or two it would pull him down, but somebody splashed and shouted, and he seized a wet hand. Another man came to help, and he was on the bank.

For some time that was all Jim really knew, but when the others pushed him into the kitchen he thought his head was cut, and he felt as if he had been beaten by a steam hammer. The lamp tossed about and the floor went up and down. He must watch his step, but when somebody held one's arm, to balance was hard, and although he advanced cautiously, he and the other hit the inclined table. By and by he knew he was on the couch in the parlour. His wet clothes were gone, and he wondered dully who had pulled them off. It was not important, and his pyjamas and the blankets under him were soft and warm. Two or three people were in the room, and when one gave him a hot drink he drained the glass. The fiery liquor brought a soothing warmth to his skin, and he imagined somebody a long way off said :

"He will perhaps be all right."

"Why, of course," said Jim in a drowsy voice. "You mustn't bother me ; I'm going to sleep."

In a few minutes he was asleep, and Mrs. Hope carried a basin of stained hot water to the kitchen, and Grace a bottle of whisky and a work basket in which were some of the medicines one usually keeps at a moorland farm. Mrs. Hope admitted the lass was competent and had bandaged Mr. Jim's head like a trained nurse. Grace turned to Wilson, who waited by the fire.

"One can account for the bruises on Mr. Railton's

body, for I expect he was battered against the rocks in the beck. But how did he cut his head?"

"He was under horses' feet in stable; he likely got a kick, and edge of an old shoe is sharp."

"Well, in the morning, you must send a man for a doctor, although I'm not sure if he's really needed."

"Bill will start at daybreak. Neabody could get through watter in the dark," the shepherd replied.

He went off and Mrs. Hope inquired:

"Are you a doctor, Miss?"

"Not at all. I am an officer of the soapworks ambulance. Sometimes we have accidents, and people who are hurt cannot wait for expert help."

"They claim to be the best in Lancashire, and I believe have not yet been rebuked at an inquest," Atherton remarked, and gave Grace a smile. "Are you as generous at the works with liquor? A smaller dose would have knocked me out, and Railton's declaring he was going to sleep was not strange."

"All we had got was whisky, and I thought he ought to sleep. When you are not seasoned to it, a large dose is rather like laudanum, and he does not use liquor."

"It's possible, but I don't know how you know," Atherton rejoined.

Grace turned to Mrs. Hope.

"Although I think none of Mr. Railton's bones is broken, he is horribly bruised, and I would sooner not risk carrying him up the awkward stairs. Then the cut in his head is rather deep, and one must allow for shock and loss of blood; in fact he ought perhaps not to be left for the night. I shall be comfortable in the big chair by the fire."

"If you stop, I stop with you," Mrs. Hope said firmly.

"Then, if I am not wanted, I will go to bed," Ather-

ton remarked. "Bill starts for the town at daybreak and I must join him. Are you going with us, Grace?"

"I think I will go with the doctor," Grace replied, and sent him off.

XVI

GRACE'S PATIENT

AT five o'clock in the morning, Jim opened his eyes and dully looked about. His head hurt and ached. The sensations were distinct and he did not know which was worse, but now he tried to move all his body hurt. A lamp on a table at the other end of the room burned low, and reflections from the fire twinkled on the iron by the grate. Mrs. Hope in a chair across the floor, was asleep, but Mr. Hope was not, and when he awkwardly turned his head she got up.

"You have slept for six hours and are feeling better for the rest," she said in a quiet voice.

"How do you know how long I slept here all night?" Jim inquired.

"Until a doctor arrives, I am in control. It is no easier?"

"If I didn't feel as if a locomotive had knocked me down, I'd be all right. I suppose I mustn't grumble, and I ought to thank you. But I can't need two nurses. And what is Mrs. Hope doing here?"

"For one thing, I believe she is rather fond of you," Grace replied with a demure twinkle Jim had remarked before. "You see, for a minute or two we thought you were drowned."

"To drown in a Cumberland beck would be ridiculous. But who pulled me out? And how did I get to bed?"

Grace signed him to be quiet. Mrs. Hope moved

her head and her chair cracked, but in a few moments they knew she was asleep.

"The shepherd and Mark went into the water. You said you felt as if a locomotive had hit you. Is that all? Or do you feel as if the knock hurt worst at some particular spot? A nurse is entitled to inquire."

"If you are interested, I'm horribly thirsty, and my head clangs like a boiler shop. So many times a minute somebody punches a rivet. In fact, I feel as I expect you ought to feel the morning after you have been doped. I think that's accurate, and I hope you're satisfied."

Grace gave him a drink and gently touched his hot skin.

"Yes, you are rather feverish. I haven't a thermometer. You ought to sleep."

"I am not going to sleep; I'd much sooner you talked to me. When you talk smoothly your voice is soothing, and so long as I'm an invalid I'm entitled to be indulged."

Grace smiled and glanced at Mrs. Hope. The house-keeper's head rested against the chair, and although her pose was slack, Grace noted her body's austere lines. Her calm face was wrinkled and thin. At one time, it perhaps was attractive. It yet had dignity.

"She will not wake," said Jim. "She's about at six o'clock in the morning, and all day she's going fast. In the evenings she knits. When you stay with your job like that your sleep is sound. For all her surface hardness, I begin to think her kind. Anyhow, she's stanch, and but for her sort's labour, I expect the *laikers* couldn't loaf. All the same, Martha Hope's object certainly is not to help them *laike*——"

"You declared my voice was soothing," Gradd remarked. "If you talk, the rivet puncher will up his stroke."

"Oh, well, I have bored my friends before polite?"

do you know if Brown Bess and her foal made the yard?"

"They are in the cart bay. I believe she knocked Richards down."

"That's something," said Jim. "But what about the other horses? And the stable?"

"Bill thinks they are on the fell. An hour or two since, I heard a rumbling crash, which might have been the roof. But you mustn't bother, and you mustn't talk. If you are not asleep in ten minutes, I will rouse Mrs. Hope."

"Then, you must help. If you talk slowly and gently, about nothing important, I might go to sleep. Or if you recited, nursery rhymes for example, on two or three smooth notes——"

"Very well," said Grace. "My repertory's old-fashioned and I may not be accurate; but for a prelude:

*'Not from the master poets and the bards sublime
Whose sounding footsteps echo——'*"

"You get there first time," said Jim. "*But take from a humbler poet——*"

"I doubt if he was very humble, but his lines run smoothly and he knew the quiet spots:

*'When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat grass and the sword grass and the bulrush in the
pool.'*"

Jim thought her voice rippled like a little beck he knew that stole between the rushes on the hill. Its hythm was soothing, and sometimes lines he did not louté flowed by.

to be

Grace *In the hawihorn shade.
hear you when you pass
my feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass."*

Jim's brain was getting dull, but he saw the tranquil picture. In the country that was not long since his, the rushing winds were cooled by the Rockies' snow, and tossed the dark pine branches above a cross on a knoll. Well, they whom he had loved were gone, and he might not go back. Other pictures banished the first; the sheep going up the fell, and the big quiet milkers moving into their stalls. Grace had declared one could love them for their gentleness. Anyhow, it was something like that, and she herself and Mrs. Hope were calm and stanch. After all he had perhaps come home to the English fells——

Grace looked up and smiled, a gentle, friendly smile. Young Jim, at length, was tranquilly asleep. She knew other young men whose talents she thought more marked than his, but she liked him for his sincerity and a sort of steadfastness. She noted the stained bandage round his head. At all events, James Railton was one who stayed with his job.

At eight o'clock, Jim rang a bell he found by the couch, and in a few moments Grace arrived.

"Yes, sir?" she said, as if she were a parlour-maid.

"You ought to be asleep, but you might send up Mark," said Jim.

"Mark and your horse-man started for the town some time since."

Jim unconsciously knitted his brows. Grace smiled.

"I expect to go when the doctor goes, Mr. Railton."

"The doctor might not get up the dale. I expect the floods would stop a car, and he has patients who need him worse. However, Hodgkin might risk it——"

He stopped, and Grace imagined he began to see that it looked as if he were keen for her to go.

"I have recently walked twenty miles a day, over the roughest ground in England, and I believe I could reach the town on my feet," she said.

Jim's eyes twinkled. "Looks as if I was not polite?"

Well, sometimes before breakfast a man is rather dull ; and then, you see, I was not long since trampled by a large Clydesdale horse. However, you might, please, ask for my clothes and send Bob to me."

"You know you ought not to get up."

"I am going to get up. Only sick folk and professional loafers like to take breakfast on a couch."

"I think you are rash," said Grace. "Still, if you are resolved, I suppose there is no use in talking."

Half an hour afterwards the shepherd stated that Mr. Jim was fettled, and Grace carried in his breakfast. He had got on his proper clothes and a large fresh handkerchief was fastened round his head, but his tie was clumsily knotted and his chin was cut. Grace imagined Bob was not an expert barber, but Jim must not think her amused. After all, he used the rules he knew. He allowed her to help him, and by and by remarked :

"You are a first-class nurse, and if it's some comfort, the doped feeling's gone. I believe I can now talk to you and not get entangled ; and if the doctor is held up for a day or two, I shall be resigned."

"That's something, Mr. Railton. Although breakfast is over, I mustn't force you to be laboriously polite. But since you have talked about it once or twice, I suppose you have been doped ? "

"Not so far as I know ; one uses one's imagination. Canadian frontiersmen do not go about shooting pistols and doped folks ; as a rule, they are more usefully occupied. You can, of course, find trouble at a frontier town. In fact, the city bosses signal where it is ; and then, if you are not a fool, you go another way. However, it's not at all important. When you are at the window, can you see if the stable roof is broken ? "

Grace said one could do so, and Jim got off the couch. Signing her to leave him alone, he awkwardly crossed the floor. Behind the courtyard wall, he saw

half of the stable roof, and some broken and tilted beams that yet supported a few heavy slabs. The rest had obviously gone down with the gable end. Jim cautiously lowered himself into the broad window-seat.

"The gable carried the ridge and purlins," he said in a thoughtful voice. "When the flood undermined the foundation the wall went. Yet I reckoned our wedged props would stand, and if Bob was frank, I might find out if Richards went back. Well, they are a queer lot, and I expect I will not find out."

He shrugged, as if he apologized, and resumed :

"The flood's second rise, when we thought it would not go higher, is accounted for. The first lot blocked the ghyll with stones and peat that held back the water like a dam. By and by the pressure broke the dam and let go another flood. But in the meantime I must keep my room, and you must not be bored."

"I am interested," Grace declared. "After all, since you did put up the props, to see you were not alarmed for nothing is perhaps some satisfaction."

"Oh, well, I'm human, and I have not to meet the bill. But if you look at it from another point, I can't claim we made a workman's job. All the same, if somebody afterwards knocked back a wedge—Would it bother you to give me the rug from the couch?"

"Not at all; but you must go back to the couch."

"By and by," said Jim. "You were going to visit with a friend at our market town. I suppose Mark would tell her where you are?"

Grace saw his mouth go tight, and his hand fasten on the ledge. It looked as if he were cramped but durst not move.

"Oh, you poor thing; you can't get back?" she said. "Since I allowed you to get up, I'm not much

of a nurse. Put your hand on my shoulder and I will steady you."

"To bother you is ridiculous."

"I expect you really think it humiliating," Grace remarked. "However, I am not going to humour you, and Bob is not about."

Gently and firmly, she pulled him up and steered him to the couch. When they got there her breath was laboured and her colour was rather high.

"Now I hope you will be satisfied to rest, and I engaged to go to the dairy with Mrs. Hope," she said.

In the afternoon a muddy open car rolled into the courtyard and for some time the doctor was occupied with Jim. Then he asked for Grace, who joined him in another room. She saw a tall, thin gentleman, and thought his clothes, like his car, carried the marks of fellside weather. His glance was searching but somehow humorous, and his skin was brown. Grace wondered whether he was a Cumbrian or a Dumfries Scot; he was, at all events, not the sort one would try to cheat.

"If you must keep your engagement, I will be happy to carry you down the dale, Miss Atherton," he said.

"I must, however, go round by a moorland farm and cross two becks on the hill road. There is not a bridge and my car's hood is broken."

"In the circumstances, you would sooner not take a passenger?" said Grace. "Might I ask how you find Mr. Railton?"

"No bones are broken, and I hope he will soon be on his feet. To kill a young fellow of his stamp is rather hard, unless, of course, one uses the proper tools."

"He said that for him to drown in a Cumberland beck would be ridiculous," Grace remarked. "However, since you are satisfied about him, there are no grounds for me to stop."

"It is, perhaps, not necessary; it might be kind. Railton is worse knocked about than he admits and must for a day or two keep his couch. He obstinately refuses to go to bed. Mrs. Hope is old, and at a moorland farm a housekeeper has not an easy post. The shepherd might be useful for a valet, but I would not choose him for a nurse, and Railton declares he will not be bothered by a servant maid. In short, if you are able to stop——"

Grace hesitated. Although the doctor's look was inscrutable, she sensed a humorous vein. She had promised to visit with her friend, but for the most part of the day Florence was engaged by her work, and her lodgings were cramped. Goldsike was spacious and marked by old-fashioned charm. Then the dales-folk and the live-stock interested her. If she must be frank, Jim Railton interested her. For some time she had perhaps too sternly concentrated on her chemistry.

"If you think my help useful, I am willing to stop," she said.

"Well, that's fixed," said the doctor. "I will order Mrs. Hope not to let you go. Now we must be professional, and you might note a few instructions——"

Grace's duties were not burdensome, and she wondered whether the doctor's keen eyes twinkled. He was typically Northern, and sometimes a north-country joke was not remarkably obvious. When he went off she returned to the panelled room and tried to put on an air of professional authority. Jim sensed a sort of demure reserve and thought it charming.

"The old fellow has hopes for my recovery, but he admitted that something depended on my getting proper care," he said. "I wonder whether he persuaded you to stop."

"Did you indicate that you wanted him to do so, Mr. Railton?"

"Not, so far as I know, Miss Atherton. Sometimes

where you must be frank you cannot be polite. The brain wave was his ; he took action altogether on his own. Now I hope you are satisfied. But did you agree ? ”

“ I engaged to stop for two days,” Grace replied in a sober voice.

“ Oh, well, that is something. Besides, you see, in the meantime I might relapse ; and then, of course, you could not go. I believe you have a heart.”

Grace smiled. She felt she ought not to smile, but Jim’s satisfaction moved her, and on the whole, for him to joke was the proper line.

“ We mustn’t risk it,” she remarked. “ Smoking will not help your recovery, and I see four cigarette ends in the hearth. You will give me the packet.”

“ If I cannot smoke, I cannot talk, and I think I’ll go to sleep,” said Jim. “ Not long since you soothed me, and I’m perhaps allowed to state you have a pleasant voice.”

“ Just now I am going to read,” said Grace.

She carried a book to the window-seat, but by and by looked up and smiled. All was very quiet and Jim was asleep.

XVII

A STANDING INVITATION

DAYLIGHT slowly melted and stars began to shine above the black moors' tops. In the quiet room the peat fire burned red and Grace had not yet bothered to get a light. For some minutes Jim had said nothing and she mused languidly. She had been four days at Goldsike, he did not really need a nurse, and she ought to go. Yet she admitted she would be sorry. The old house had a restful charm, and for all her ambitions, she would sooner be in the quiet hills than in sooty Lancashire.

When she was not with Jim, she took the moor path, or went to the dairy, where all its proper occupants did interested her. Her knowing something about chemical reactions perhaps accounted for it, but she was interested and Jim had grumbled because she left him alone. A throbbing note pierced the drowsy murmur of the beck, and he looked up.

"A car? Hodgin, I expect; but you might see who is on board."

The car stopped and Grace went to the window.

"A tall old gentleman is getting down. He is rather like the doctor, but is more strongly built. Now he crosses the channel by the trough, he uses his stick."

"My uncle," said Jim. "The water cure has worked. Before he resolved to try it, he used his stick all the time."

"Since he will come in to ask for you, I must get a light," said Grace.

Jim agreed. Grace must not think him amused, but he wondered whether she imagined their sitting in the dusk struck a sort of domestic note. In a way, the situation was humorous ; old Jim certainly would not expect to find an attractive young woman was his nephew's guest. He might not approve, but one could reckon on his playing up.

After about ten minutes, Railton came. It looked as if he had informed himself about his visitors, for when Jim presented Grace he gave her a friendly smile and his thanks for nursing his nephew, as if he saw nothing strange in her doing so. Grace knew he studied her, but she was not embarrassed ; she had, of course, no grounds to be embarrassed, although Jim did not very obviously need a nurse.

"I am happy to see your step is firmer, sir," Jim remarked. "The fresh treatment has braced you up. Anyhow, the doctors have let you go some time before we thought."

In the circumstances, Grace imagined Railton might think the statement rather frank than discreet ; but had she not been about, she believed he might have smiled.

"The cure worked, but loafing soon gets dreary," he said and turned to Grace. "In the fells we are rather an industrious and frugal lot, Miss Atherton, and to pay a large fee for peat-water baths looked extravagant. At Goldsike, as you have perhaps remarked, one can get for nothing all the peat water one wants. But do you yourself approve hydropathic cures ?"

Grace wondered whether his eyes twinkled ; she did not really know.

"I am not a trained nurse," she said.

"Then, your talent, in a way, is native ? However, the important thing is, you have helped to put my nephew on his feet. The farm, you see, is rather large

for two cripples to superintend. I believe a nurse of any sort is sometimes tyrannical, and I hope I may be allowed to join you at supper. In the evening the kitchen is the men's club."

Grace agreed, and on the whole Jim admitted the old fellow had seen him out. At supper Railton was a polite host, but when the plates were carried off he vanished for some time. After he was gone, Grace gave Jim a thoughtful glance.

"Mr. Railton is kind, but you feel he might be stern. I think he, like Mrs. Hope, is willing to indulge you."

"Where they approve, it's possible," said Jim. "Mrs. Hope has been long at Goldsike, and the Railtons are not a rashly indulgent lot."

Grace agreed. She sensed in young Jim something of the hardness she thought marked his uncle. Yet she was not jarred. She herself had inherited a Puritan vein and she believed a man ought, at all events, to be firm. She knew young fellows whom one could turn by a smile, and some who risked a career for an evening's escapade.

The Railtons acknowledged themselves frugal, but they were not shabby; she imagined they took nothing for which they did not pay, and sometimes to be generous was easier than to be just. Railton claimed they were industrious, and when one studied Goldsike, one must admit the claim would stand. That young Jim was like his uncle she did not doubt; their virtues, and perhaps their drawbacks, were Puritan, and she herself had inherited something from ancestors of their sort. Well, the Railtons' qualities had nothing to do with her, and in the morning she would be gone. Turning to Jim with a careless smile, she began to talk about the hills, and when Railton came back she went off.

"Miss Atherton uses some tact," he remarked.

"Her brother pulled me out of the beck," said Jim. "I was rather knocked about, Mrs. Hope was not able to look after me, and Miss Atherton gave up part of her holiday——"

"Just that," said Railton with a touch of dry humour. "The lass is a canny lass and I reckon her competent. Then, so long as Martha Hope does not grumble, your friends are welcome at my house; but if Kirstine Firth had wanted to nurse you, I doubt if she'd have got by the door."

Jim had remarked that his uncle talked to Grace like a cultivated gentleman. Now, however, one knew him for a dalesman. Stopping to light his pipe, he resumed:

"The stable end is down, but you saved the horses and part of the roof. I begin to think you'll earn your pay, my lad."

"I had good help, sir. The men were willing."

"They had a leader. If you give them a job, the job, as a rule, is done, but where they might see another they refuse to look about. Richards is different: the fellow calculates, and I'd trust him to use his brains. The trouble is, he does not like his new boss."

"Then, you know about our dispute?"

"I believe I know more than I was told," said Railton dryly. "Richards is not a favourite, but in the North a farm servant does not give his master his confidence. For all that, Martha Hope is your champion and the men like you. In fact, had you bullied and hustled them, you might not have kept your post. I can sack one and another and I meet the bills, but unless I can trust my servants, I cannot carry on the farm."

"Richards is a useful man. All the same, I am your bailiff, and if he threatens to quit at Martinmas, I must ask you to let him go."

Railton looked up with a grim smile.

"He is going now. He will send for his box in the morning, and since he reckons to get a softer job, I expect to see Stoddart's cart."

Jim was rather moved. After all, he was but a servant and the old fellow had supported him nobly in his first dispute.

"In a way, I am sorry, sir. Richards knew his job, he knows our rules and plans, and if he goes to Stoddart——"

"Exactly," Railton agreed. "His knowledge might be useful to the opposition. Stoddart is Firth's man and Firth is not my friend. In fact, if you had annoyed Bob, I expect they'd have carried off my shepherd. However, you have not yet done with Richards. A dalesman does not forget an injury."

"Oh, well," said Jim, "I must risk it; but, for my sake, you have lost a good servant."

"Richards was a good servant because he thought it paid. The fellow is greedy, but I reckon he loves power as much as he loves a treasury note. Well, since sciatica crippled me, he, no doubt, imagined he might seize the control I was forced to let go. In a year or two he'd be indispensable and command higher pay; in three or four years, he might rule the farm. Now you perhaps see why I sent for you?"

Jim nodded. He did not think his uncle's object altogether selfish, but Richards must have felt his arrival something of a knock-out.

"All the same, you might have got a young fellow from an English agricultural college."

"That is so," said Railton and gave him a queer, friendly smile. "I did not want a stranger at Goldsike. I would sooner engage a dalesman whose name is mine. However, let's talk about something else. At the hydropathic I got some news. The landlord of White Scar is dead; Thomson of Mireside, who now rents the land, is going, and I expect the trustees

will be forced to sell. The estate comprises a belt of moor, two or three arable fields and some pasture by the lower Staneghyll beck, and the old bobbin mill."

"The White Scar boundary touches yours and Firth's," said Jim. "Nobody is at the house, which I suppose, is rather large for a farmer, but the bit of moor would be a useful extension for the Goldsike heaf."

"Or for Staneghyll," said Railton. "Firth might use it for a fresh point of attack."

"It's possible, sir. He would lengthen the boundary he forces us to watch," said Jim in a thoughtful voice. "Still, if he had not another object, do you think he'd invest the sum the estate would cost?"

"I expect you think I exaggerate the grudge Firth bears me?" Railton rejoined. "You do not know the man, and you did not know my half-sister. He married her for the inheritance she did not get; I believe she sincerely thought I cheated, and where she was baffled she used a bitter tongue. Well, I reckon Firth paid for his greediness, and he has for long indulged. A man who broods alone over his liquor magnifies a grievance, until sometimes it carries him away."

Jim was not altogether persuaded, but he admitted Firth and his tenant were not pleasant neighbours, and he let it go.

"There is the old mill," he said. "The Staneghyll beck is not large, but the fall to the dale is good and a modern turbine develops some power."

"I doubt if the machine would pay. At one time, bobbin mills were numerous in the North. A big water-wheel drove the lathes on which spools for cotton and so forth were turned. They, however, could not compete with steam, and the mill has not run for sixty years. No; if the trustees sell White Scar, it will be bought for a farm."

"Do you really think Firth would buy it?"

"I dare say he would like to do so; the trouble would be to get the sum he would need. I do not know if I would speculate, but I might be forced. However, the estate is not yet for sale, and we have banished Miss Atherton. I understand she is a musician and she might play for me."

Grace did so, and Jim admitted the old fellow knew more about good music than he had imagined. When she stopped, they engaged in friendly talk and by and by Wilson helped Jim to his proper room.

At ten o'clock in the morning Hodson's car rolled into the courtyard and two minutes after the engine stopped Grace came downstairs. Jim thought it typical that she did not force the driver to wait.

"I am sorry I must go, but my holiday is over and in a day or two you will be at work again," she said.

Jim did not want to let her go, but her voice was careless and his line was perhaps to joke.

"If I had thought about it, I might have fallen downstairs and forced you to stop."

"It might have been rash. One does not know when one's luck will turn, and when you went over the bridge, yours was perhaps remarkably good."

"If Jim had not got a competent nurse, he might have had some grounds to doubt," Railton observed. "Since the young fellow begins to be useful, you have my best thanks, but I hope you will come back. Gold-sike is large and sometimes dreary, but I believe you like the fells."

"You are kind," said Grace, smiling. "Might I confess that I like the fellside folk?"

"We have some drawbacks," said Railton. "I mustn't claim we are rashly friendly, but we know whom we can trust. When you and your brother can take a holiday my invitation stands."

He carried her off, and Jim, limping to the window,

watched the car start. His uncle and Mrs. Hope were on the steps, and at the courtyard arch Grace turned and gave them a smile. He thought her glance for a moment rested on the house ; and then the car vanished behind the arch. In a minute or two Railton came back.

"The lass is a canny lass," he remarked. "Some women trail disturbance and where they go trouble springs. Goldsike has known their sort——" He stopped for a moment, as if he brooded, and resumed with a twinkle: "I doubt if another will get in so long as Martha Hope keeps the door. Well, we have not a byreman, and I hope you will soon be about."

In two or three days Jim got back to work. The cattle were in the byres and must be fed. The days got short and the bogs got softer, but when the hill grass withered, Bob needed help to stop fresh invasions by the Staneghyll sheep. Then Goldsike lambs were missing, and he admitted that where marks were cunningly altered a shepherd sometimes was puzzled to know his own. Moreover, he hinted that Richards knew the best Goldsike lambs. Jim agreed that since the fellow joined Stoddart the shepherd's work got harder.

The trouble was, when one was needed at the farmstead one ought to be on the hill, and the horse-man must plough the leys for next year's crop. Jim got up sooner and began and stopped in the dark. The short days were crowded, and after supper he was happy to loaf by the fire. Sometimes he thought about Grace Atherton and sometimes he slept.

Railton had not yet got a fresh byreman. The farm servants' general post was the hiring-fair in spring, but some changed round at Martinmas, which would soon arrive. Anyhow, Jim liked action, and he had not at any time bothered to seize the softest job.

XVIII

JIM ENGAGES A BYREMAN

JIM, coming back from the hill late one evening, was stopped by the dairymaid in the courtyard. The girl carried a lantern and when she said a stranger waited his return he thought she smiled. Railton had gone to see his lawyer and would stop for the night, but the girl said it was not for him the gentleman inquired. He had asked for James the second, and when Jim went to the kitchen he admitted some curiosity.

At the door he stopped for a moment. A group by the fireplace listened to the stranger's talk. His back was to the door, but Mrs. Hope fronted Jim, and he remarked her slow smile. Bill, the horse-man laughed, a fell-sider's quiet laugh; the rosy young kitchenmaid's grin was wide and frank. Since Martha Hope acknowledged herself amused, the fellow's tale was humorous; but the queer thing was Jim had thought he knew his voice. His boots rattled on the flags and the other turned his head.

"Mike!" said Jim. "If I'd known you waited, I would not have stopped for all the sheep on the fell."

Connor's glance searched his face and twinkled. After all, he'd have betted on Jim's receiving him like that.

"Lamp's in room and Kate will bring your supper," Mrs. Hope remarked. "Shall I send fresh plates?"

"You will not, thank you, ma'm," said Mike.

"The house is hospitable, but my youth is gone and I cannot get away with two suppers in wan evening." He turned to Jim, who waited. "Will I go in with you?"

"And why would you not, old timer?" said Jim. "If you cannot eat, you can talk, and I've known you use some sense when you discourse at large."

Pushing Mike into an easy chair, he gave him tobacco and a drink; and then resumed:

"I expect you know I'm glad you looked me up; anyhow, you ought to know. But did you walk up the dale? And where did you get supper?"

"I rode in a c'yar," Mike replied and loaded his pipe. "When I got off the train I purshood my inquiries at the *Hollybush*. When you want information, an inn is the next best spot to a mothers' meeting. At the inn I met up with a neighbour of yours, and since he was a knowledgeable young fella' and a gentleman, we drank some beer and discoorsed about cows. Then we loaded the c'yar with yellow meal and I took supper at his house."

"Hodgin!" said Jim, and studied the other with twinkling eyes.

Mike's clothes were good. The stuff perhaps was Irish homespun, for now he stretched his legs to the fire, one noted its faint woolly smell. His boots were as neat and tight as a woman's; a Western frontiersman does not load his feet with iron and leather. For all his lined skin, his figure was athletic and he carried the horseman's stamp. Jim imagined he had excited some curiosity at the *Hollybush*.

"Your habit is to fall on your feet," he remarked.

"They and the c'yar carried me to this house," said Mike. "It's no matther the house is your uncle's. I saw him in the town."

"Then, you knew him?"

"I was your father's servant," Mike rejoined.

The kitchenmaid brought in supper, and Mike, urged again to eat, broke with his fingers a potato-scone and a morsel of mutton-ham, as if he carried out a sort of ritual. Then he went back to his chair and balanced a large tea-cup on his knee. He was not awkward; Jim reckoned Mike would not be awkward in a drawing-room.

"Are you taking a holiday?" he asked.

"I am not. If yes wanted a cowman, I would take the job."

"By George, we might!" said Jim. "But you reckoned you had done with cows. Was not the country at the back of Derryveagh all you thought?"

"Errigal stands where she stood, and the sea's as blue," said Mike. "It was the folk that had althered, with store clothes on the backs of them and their feet in English shoes. I went home, but nobody knew me at the spot where I was born."

"If you had stopped, I expect you'd have been something like head Sachem in about twelve months."

"And why would I stop? The boys I knew were gone and the girls were wore out long since at the Belfast mills. And the new lot thinking me a stranger and an American!"

"In the foothills, you were a pretty good hunter," said Jim. "What about the snipe bogs and the rivers *thick* with trout?"

"The trout are a gentleman's from Manchester, and wan from London has the big house on the hill. He claims the snipe are his, and since ye cannot shoot them in the dark, I'm thinking his claim is good. Ye must get somebody's leave to cut a creel o' turf. ye must not take a lobster that is not the lawful size, and if ye go sea-fishing they measure up your net. An' that's what they burned the law courts for! Now we're independent, them Free State guards is worse than the R.I.C."

Sometimes in Alberta Jim had not known when Connor joked. Now if he was humorous, his humour was touched by melancholy.

"England has some advantages and you have been in the North before," said Jim. "Our cowman is gone and we pay a little above the standard rate for a first-class man, but it is not the pay you got in Canada."

"I am not broke," Mike remarked in a quiet voice.

Jim nodded. Mike implied that he refused to haggle. The fellow was not careless about money, but he was proud.

"Very well. If you join up with us, I'll be happy, but I am not boss. Goldsike is my uncle's, and in all that touches the dairy, Mrs. Hope's word goes."

"The woman rules this house and I would say her rule is good."

"That is so," Jim agreed. "At the beginning, she rather daunted me, but it did not look as if she embarrassed you."

Mike gave him a twinkling smile. "Mistress Hope is but a woman, and although her hand is firm her heart is soft. Maybe she was kind to me for my soothing tongue. In English, plausible's your word; but sometimes the charm yes do not know is the wan that helps yes most."

Jim imagined he saw where the fellow led, and Grace had stated that Mrs. Hope was his friend. In the meantime, it was not important, and he said:

"I mustn't claim my uncle would be an easy boss."

"He would not; I studied Mr. Railton in the shop where we got the yellow meal. A hard man and commandin'; when he talks ye move. The divvle could not cheat him, but ye could take his word. In Canada I worked for wan like him, and I would take his brother's post."

On the whole, the portrait was accurate and Jim pondered. Mike had been engaged on English farms

before and he knew much about cattle. Then he was marked by a queer subtlety that Jim himself, and perhaps his uncle, had not. In fact, the fellow had a sort of native talent for spotting intrigues, which, since one could reckon on his loyalty, might be useful. For example, Mike had laboured to persuade him to leave Frensham's scheme alone.

It looked as if old Jim might not altogether recover from his infirmity, and Firth and his tenant were unscrupulous. Unless one watched the moor by day and night, Staneghyll sheep robbed the Goldsike flock, and Bob declared they had infected some with scab: moreover, he reckoned he knew whose was the dog that had worried Railton's lambs. Then Stoddart's cattle broke the fences in the lower dale, and one had some grounds to think somebody helped the brutes.

For neighbours on moorland sheep farms to avoid disputes was perhaps hard, but Jim sensed a determined, cunning hostility, that, when it was baffled, but shifted its point of attack. Railton took the knocks and said nothing. Jim imagined the old fellow waited, but in the meantime the knocks were annoying and watchfulness was a strain.

"I expect I can get the post for you, but until all's fixed you are my guest," he said.

In the afternoon next day Railton got home and when he had talked with Mike said to Jim:

"You want to engage the man? You are entitled to choose your helpers and he was at your ranch. Do you trust him?"

Jim said he would answer for Mike's honesty, and Railton nodded.

"Then he can get to work. If he had handled sheep, we'd send him to the fell."

"Wilson is a first-class shepherd, sir."

"Oh, yes," said Railton dryly. "Bob knows sheep; your Irish friend knows men, and he has some

talents Englishmen, as a rule, have not. So long as he is our man, the talents might be useful."

Mike got to work and in two or three weeks was firmly established at Goldsike. He *spayed* the servant maids fortunes in the red peat ash and pictured for them handsome lovers. Martha Hope was not at all a trustful optimist, but when neuritis bothered her she used an old Irish charm. He cured Bob's sick dog, but a cunning dog of Stoddart's and a suspected sheep-worrier vanished from the *heaf* soon after Mike arrived. Then a foal went sick, and Bill admitted the byreman's prescription worked better than the vet's.

It was not all. Sometimes in the dark evenings Mike crossed the bogs to Nethersceugh, where there was an inn, and on Sundays he rambled down to farmsteads in the lower dale. In consequence, he soon knew much about Stoddart's household, and although he perhaps did not tell all he knew, when the Staneghyll shepherds moved their flock Bob was warned.

For all Mike's care, some young stirks of Railtons strayed, and one dark afternoon he and Jim searched the dale. The cattle were but put out for an hour or two, and Mike declared he had fastened the gate, but when he went for them the gate was open. Mike kept the road; Jim followed the beck, and after a time reached a little wood on one side of the old bobbin mill.

The walls and the most part of the roof yet stood, but somebody had long since removed the machinery and the boards from the beams that had carried the second floor. Near the big iron undershot wheel, thick flagstones crossed the lead, and for a few moments Jim looked about. Sixty or seventy yards off, the dam yet stood, but time and numerous floods had cut its front, and perhaps blocked with silt the by-pass sluice, for an angry current leaped across the tumbled stones, and plunged down the inclined lead to a culvert

by the wheel. The channel was walled, and since heavy rain had swept the hills, the water filled the culvert." Jim imagined the woolly object in the turmoil under the wheel was a sheep the stream had carried down and entangled in the ironwork.

He crossed the flagstones. Inside the mill, the light was dim, but somebody moved about at the other end. The fellow stooped, as if he pulled something across the floor, and Jim, wondering what he did, advanced along the wall. The other heard his step, for he got up and pushed into his pocket a flat circular object that looked like a spring tape-measure. Then he turned, and the light from a broken doorway touched his face.

Jim saw it was Firth, and imagined his arrival had annoyed the fellow. Indeed, when Firth looked up, he sensed an emotion for which annoyance was perhaps not the proper word. Moreover, he saw a note-book on some stones by the door. In a moment, Firth's queer look vanished, and sitting down carelessly on the note-book, he pulled out a cigarette.

"Hello, Railton! I thought myself alone, and when I saw you in the gloom I got something like a jolt. Will you take a smoke?"

"No, thanks," said Jim. "I am looking for some strayed cattle and mustn't stop. When you are in the meadow by the beck, the roof stands up behind the trees and I had not been here before."

"And you indulged your curiosity? On a dark afternoon, the spot is not attractive."

Somehow Jim thought it sinister. All one heard was the angry turmoil of the lead. One smelt rotting wood, damp moss, and dead leaves. On one side bare trees spread their branches across the bleak, high windows from which the glass was gone.

"The building was once a factory, and the old walls

are thick," he said. "If you put up a turbine, you would get cheap power from the beck."

"Very limited power," said Firth. "The days when a small factory paid are gone. However, if one risked some money for repairs, the mill would make a noble barn."

"White Scar house is half a mile off, and a smaller barn would cover all the crop the fields would grow."

"Rather obviously," Firth agreed in a careless voice. "Yet, if they were joined to Goldsike, the barn might be useful. However, if James Railton thought about speculating, I dare say he would sooner you did not acknowledge White Scar's advantages."

"It's possible," said Jim. "So far as I know, my uncle does not want the estate, but he does not consult with me about his speculations. He engaged me for his farm bailiff and I think that was all."

The light was going, but he imagined Firth gave him a swift glance, as if he doubted his sincerity. Moreover, he sensed an antagonism he thought the other had meant to hide. Firth had for some time known he and Kirstine were friends, but when Jim had met him in the town nothing indicated that he was annoyed. In fact, he was now carelessly urbane. All the same, Jim felt he was not cheated.

"It looks as if you might speculate," he resumed.

"I am not rich, and if I had got the sum White Scar ought to fetch, I know more profitable investments than an old-fashioned, lonely house and a moorland farm. However, I expect you saw me measuring?"

"I saw you sit on your note-book. You perhaps did not know?" said Jim.

Firth laughed, a laugh that somehow jarred.

"The book cost sixpence and the stones are damp. In a country town, a lawyer is his clients' financial adviser, stockbroker, and estate agent. Land has

yet a rather strange attraction for some people, and sometimes where I myself would hesitate I negotiate for another."

"You imply that a client of yours might buy?"

"I do not. The estate will, I think, be offered for sale; my business is to be informed, and I might be asked for particulars. Since I am going to Staneghyll, I thought I would look at the property."

Jim wondered whether Firth had meant to go to Staneghyll. He perhaps did not want him to think he had driven up the dale in order to take the measurements.

"Then, I suppose your car is at the house?"

"No," said Firth. "The car is in a lonning behind the dam. I did not take the path you took. Another comes down by the mill lead."

Jim reflected. His inquiry was perhaps not tactful, for in order to reach the lonning, Firth had driven past the house, and one might imagine that he wished to hide his car. He mustn't be ridiculous, but he again sensed a sort of malevolent antagonism. Sensed was the proper word, because Firth's voice was careless and his manner rather bored. Anyhow, Jim was satisfied he did smell brandy.

"Well, I must push on, and the lonning is my shortest line," he said. "The lead is rather wide to jump. I suppose I must go round by the main door?"

"An old plank crosses the channel," Firth replied. "I carry heavier weight than you, but you must go cautiously."

At the end of the plank Jim stopped. Although the light was going, he saw the wood at one or two spots was rotten; the channel was walled by smooth slabs and the current plunged savagely down the incline. Although the water was not deep, to get on one's feet might be awkward, and one might be swept into the culvert and under the wheel where the sheep was

drowned. Yet a plank that carried Firth certainly ought to carry him, and he did not want to go back to the flagstone bridge. The other must not think he hesitated to take a path an older man had used.

He did hesitate. After all, had Firth crossed the plank? Jim began to doubt. Somehow, for all his carelessness, the fellow was queer. He carried a long pike stick he used on the hills, and driving the iron point into the wood, he seized a small mountain-ash that grew in the stones. Then he jambed his shoulder against the crook and used all his force. The stick went through the plank, he heard a dull crash, and rotten timber splashed in the lead. Jim swung back, and when he fell against the tree his skin was wet by sweat.

His impulse was to front the treacherous brute, but he reflected. Firth had warned him, and after all it was possible that the fellow, treading cautiously when the light was good, had crossed the plank. Jim doubted; Firth was rather a large man and carried weight. Yet he had nothing to go upon but a strange and horrible suspicion, and he admitted that his imagining a respectable lawyer had planned to drown him was ridiculous. In fact, had another told the tale, he himself might think a fellow who believed a thing like that ought to be drowned.

All the same he could not banish the suspicion, and if he went back through the mill and met Firth, anger might carry him away. He followed the lead up stream and seeing a spot where the flags on the other side had fallen, risked a running jump for the broken bank. A few moments afterwards, somebody shouted and Mike joined him by the dam.

"The strayed beasts are in the Mireside pasture," he said. "It would not be you I saw at the mill door by the wheel?"

"It was not," Jim replied. "You think you did see somebody?"

"When I was fifty yards off, a fellow stood by the flagstone bridge, and I think his head was turned as if he looked up the lead. Under the wall, wan could not see him disthinctly, and when I passed the wheel he was not there."

"Mr. Firth was in the mill. For a few minutes I stopped for a talk," said Jim. "But come on. It will be dark before we can move the cattle."

They climbed the dam, and Jim saw a car in the lane behind the pool. Firth would, no doubt, go on to Staneghyll, although when he started he had probably not meant to do so. Mike thought he watched the lead. Jim wondered whether Firth had expected to see him swept into the culvert. He did not know; he doubted if he would ever know. Old Jim had stated that a man who brooded alone over liquor might magnify a grievance until it carried him away.

XIX

THE BROKEN WALL

RAILTON'S best arable field was sheltered by a wood. Small firs grew among the slender birches, and unless one was on the hill, the trees cut one's view. On the side opposite the wood, the Staneghyll beck brawled in its channel at the bottom of a steep crag, and the Goldsike wall followed the beck, a few yards back from the bank. It looked as if the stream was the natural boundary and former Railtons had claimed it for theirs, but Jim's grandfather had lost a lawsuit about the right of way, and the judge declared that all might use the green track along the waterside.

The field was ploughed in its proper rotation. Seeds-grass followed oats, and when the hay was mown clover grew in the aftermath. Wilson put some sheep in the field, but sheep must soon be moved and when they went he resolved to husband the stuff they did not eat. In the bleak back-end, green food was scarce, and the wiry clover would stand for some time before it and the grass shrivelled in the winter rain.

Jim, crossing the field one evening, heard sheep bleat. A flock came down the waterside, and since he did not hear dogs bark, he thought it strange. If he had not a dog, to get the flock across the small wooden bridge at the cliff end would bother him; moreover dusk was falling and one did not move sheep in the dark. Anyhow, there was no use in his looking

for a rabbit by the beck, and he sat down on a birch trunk, his gun across his knees.

The evening was calm. Mist streaked the moor tops; in the South-West, grey clouds trailed across a pale-orange sky. Faint reflection from the sunset yet touched the limestone crag, and Jim, watching for the sheep, thought somebody crouched in the dead fern by the wall. Indistinct himself, in the gloom by the wood, he waited.

The sheep stopped and pushed against each other. He heard their feet click on stones and trample in wet grass, but they did not advance. He pictured the animals in front turning their heads to the obstacle and holding back the flock behind, and the noise indicated that the flock was large. The man in the fern did not move.

Then another man got on the wall, and sitting on the top, moved his head as if his glance searched the field. Where he had climbed, the ground sloped to a boggy hollow, and the wall, which followed the incline, was weak; a dry-stone dyke is never remarkably firm. After a moment or two, stones splashed in the bog, and Jim thought he saw the fellow's plan.

Since the field was hidden by the rocks and trees, the sheep might stop for a day or two before their trespassing was remarked; and then Stoddart would claim that Railton's business was to keep his fences good. They might, however, be removed at day-break, and until the gap in the wall was discovered, nobody at Goldsike would know they had been about. Anyhow, they would eat up a quantity of scarce green food. The drawback was, the fellow on the wall did not know one of Railton's men watched him from the fern and another from the wood.

After a few moments he began to throw the blocks into the green road; he perhaps wanted it to look as if the wall had fallen over from the inside. At

all events, he now fronted the beck, and the watcher in the field, stealing forward, seized his coat. The other tried to hit him with a stone, but he held on and got up into the gap the first had made. They grappled savagely, rocked about, and then amidst the crash of falling blocks, vanished behind the wall.

Jim crossed the field, and when he reached the gap Mike fronted Richards on the turf between the wall and the beck. Their breath was laboured, and although the light was going their stained clothes seemed to indicate that they had rolled in the boggy grass. Then Mike moved swiftly and his fist crashed on Richards' jaw. Richards staggered but came back, and Mike tried to get away. The belt of turf, however, was narrow, and they grappled.

Jim sat down in the fallen stones. He thought neither knew he had arrived and in the meantime he was not entitled to meddle; moreover, he doubted if they would stop for him. Richards was the larger man; Mike was faster, and Jim had known him knock out two cowboys in a rough-house on the plains. All the same, his allowing Richards to seize him was rash, since wrestling is the dalesman's favourite sport.

In a few moments Mike's legs were uppermost, but when he crashed he pulled down his antagonist, and on the ground one was perhaps as good as another. Anyhow, they were obviously not going to be fastidious, and when Mike hammered Richards' head against a block Jim advanced. The men rolled apart and got on their feet. Richards' coat was torn. Mike had not his hat and his face was stained by blood, but he waved Jim back.

"Ye will lave us alone," he gasped. "If I cannot put the fella' in the beck, I'll deserve to be kilt."

The sheep began to surge about, and another man pushed through the flock, and stopped when he saw Jim. Richards jumped for Mike and they resumed

the fight. The dalesman's style was the haymaker's style, and one tremendous knock drove Mike against the wall. Jim doubted if flesh and blood could bear another, but Mike got away and they circled the narrow belt of turf. It looked as if Richards meant to grapple, but Mike was as elusive as an eel, and in Cumberland wrestling one is allowed to get a proper hold.

For all that, after a crowded half-minute they were on the ground, and it looked as if Mike was on top. The Staneghyll shepherd, carrying a pike stick, ran for the spot. Jim got in front, his gun under his arm.

"You are not going to help your pal," he said.

"I was gan t' stop them," the other rejoined.

Jim smiled, and indicated the straining, gasping objects in the grass. All he distinctly saw was their thrashing legs, but it looked as if their bodies revolved.

"If that is so, your nerve is good, but I will take your stick," he said.

The shepherd waited. The others rolled a foot or two apart, and Mike was first up. He allowed Richards to get on his feet, and for about half a minute a confused fight raged in the falling dark. Mike's luck perhaps was good, and Jim imagined he was not fastidious about where he struck, but Richards stopped in a savage rush and went backwards down the bank. He rolled into the beck, and when Jim and the shepherd pulled him from the water he had had enough.

"You will move the sheep," said Jim. "We'll wait for them to go."

The flock broke and vanished noisily down the hill. Jim heard wet fleeces shake and little feet splash at boggy spots. When all was quiet, he joined Mike, who sat in the grass.

"Ten years since, I'd have gone down and destroyed the fella'," Mike remarked. "To feel age your master is melancholy."

"For an old-timer, you put up a pretty good fight," said Jim. "I reckon we ought to mend the wall, but I'll send Bob after breakfast. I doubt if I could fit the stones in the dark."

In the morning Bob mended the wall, and when he came home for dinner, reported that Hodson's man had told him Richards kept his bed, and Stoddart had yoked the pony and gone down the dale. Bob imagined he had gone for the police.

After supper, Railton, smoking his pipe by the fireplace, remarked to Jim:

"To ask the police to meddle is not the fellsiders' rule, and I doubt if Richards will thank his master. When you were not long since famous for wrestling, to be put in a beck by a light-weight stranger is humiliating."

"Oh, well, I thought our man would be knocked out, and the other had not much chance to get the hold he knew. But you seem to think Richards will refuse to prosecute."

"Had they been alone, I expect he would sooner have let it go," said Railton in a thoughtful voice. "He, however, had an audience, and since he is not a favourite, he'd reckon on the story's being told with a chuckle up and down the dale. In the circumstances, he might be willing to get something back, and Stoddart will push him on. All the same, Richards, in his own mind, will make you accountable. You banished him to Staneghyll, and your man put him in the beck."

"I must risk his hurting me, sir. So far, his plans, so to speak, have recoiled, although my luck, of course, might turn. However, when you think about it, our disputes with Stoddart are not really important."

"Stoddart is greedy and spiteful," said Railton. "I think that is all, and had he had another landlord,

we might not have quarrelled, but I would not allow his flock to trespass, and he knew Firth hated me. The trouble really began when Firth married my half-sister for the inheritance she did not get. She is gone, and although I do not claim I was generous, I did not cheat——”

For a moment or two he brooded, and then resumed :
“ I have told you something like this before ; to talk about bygone days is an old fellow's habit, but the past is never altogether done with. Its consequences stand. I reckon Firth's disappointment worked on him. He has some talents and was ambitious, and had he got the money he thought to get, he might have made his mark at a more important spot than our quiet market town. Then he perhaps believes, as his wife believed, that I cheated. He uses liquor. Well, I know two or three useful men who in our market, are sometimes gloriously and steadily, secret soaking in another sentiment, jealousy, and liquor have weakened his brain, and for all his cleverness, he thinks himself a fool. He's rather like the type of lunatic who has one fixed illusion. A paranoic, isn't it ? ”

Jim said he did not know, and getting a light for his pipe, he cogitated. Firth did not very obviously carry the stamp of indulgence, but he had thought him queer. In fact, he had begun to think the fellow might be dangerous. He had not yet told Railton about his meeting Firth at the mill, and he now did so, although he said nothing about the rotten plank.

“ He was measuring ? ” said Railton. “ Well, he is now and then in Manchester, and may know something that we do not, but I doubt if Lancashire manufacturers would risk their money. The power they'd get is small, and although you can quarry outcrop coal on Langside, the seam is thin and the stuff so

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poor that we seldom bring down a load. It looks as if the White Scar trustees know nothing about the scheme, for I heard they are willing to sell the estate and it may be offered for public auction. If Firth wants it, he must pay the proper price."

"Not long since, you implied you were not keen about buying, sir?" said Jim, and although Railton's eyes twinkled, he thought his humour bleak.

"I might *bid*. So far as my agent can find out, offers are not at all numerous, and I dare say the trustees will advertise a public sale. I do not want Firth to have another farm with a boundary touching mine. But you believe the fellow took measurements? After all some cotton weaving and dyeing is yet carried on in Cumberland; fast-colour specialities, and so forth. Your walking-tourist friend is on the Manchester Exchange. You might ask him and his sister to Goldsike for the Christmas holidays, if you like."

Jim was keen to do so, but he hesitated. Grace must not have grounds to think him willing to use his friends.

"If some cotton manufacturers thought of buying the mill, I expect they would get to work as quietly as possible, and Atherton would know nothing about the plan."

"Quite," said Railton dryly. "We do not know if there is a plan. Miss Atherton is a canny lass, and she might be willing to amuse an infirm old fellow. If she bothered you, I dare say you could find a job on the fell."

"If you give me a job, sir, I must go," Jim said with a smile. "They might have other engagements, but I'll send your invitation."

In the morning a rather apologetic county policeman called at Goldsike. When sheep were dipped the farm was hospitable; his moorland round was long, and after fronting the rain on the boggy hills, he had

been glad to rest by Mrs. Hope's fireplace and share the shepherd's meal. For all that, he stated, a constable's duty must be carried out, and in consequence, Jim and Mike some days afterwards started for the town.

The magistrates' court was crowded, for the disputes between Goldsike and Staneghyll were talked about and everybody who could push into the rather small room had done so. A man was fined for stopping a dog at a hound trail, and Jim, when he heard the story admired the fellow's nerve. Another paid ten shillings for riding a bicycle that had not a light, and a farmer a larger sum because he had not invited the police to superintend when he dipped some Scottish sheep. Then Michael Connor stood up to answer a charge of assault.

Richards' tale was plausible. He and the shepherd were moving sheep, and he missed two or three that had gone in front. A hog-hole pierced the wall, and he thought the sheep had got through into the field. A hog-hole when not used ought to be stopped, but the Goldsike fences were badly kept. Sometimes, when food was scarce, folk were willing for sheep to stray.

A magistrate stated that he must confine his remarks to the assault, and he sullenly resumed. In order to look for the sheep, he got on the wall. If one took time, one could build a dry-stone dyke to stand, but the dyke was *thrown up*, and when he pushed his leg over, the top blocks fell. Railton's byreman seized his coat, and while he tried to get away they knocked down more stones. They fell through the gap, and when he got up the byreman, without provocation, struck him in the face. Richards admitted he tried to defend himself, but the ground was boggy, and when his boot slipped, the other knocked him backwards down the bank.

Richards sat down and bent his head, as if he were glad he need no longer front his audience. A strip of pink sticking plaster crossed his face, and his skin beneath one eye was purple-blue. For all that, he flashed a swift, malignant glance across the court at Jim. Jim almost was daunted. He knew himself up against savage, revengeful hate.

The shepherd told his tale. When Richards got on the wall, he was behind the sheep, but he, like the other, thought some were in the field.

"And him, by his own word, behind the flock!" ^{—E per} Mike remarked. "If he can see through a stone dyke, and it getting dark, his eye is good."

He was ordered to be quiet, but three or four people laughed and Jim thought the magistrate smiled. Another asked if the sheep did get into the field.

"And why would they not? When Staneghyll sheep carry crowbars and wire-cutters?" said Mike in a quiet voice.

Two or three farmers near him chuckled. They, at all events, saw the joke, but Mike's remark had not reached the bench, and the shepherd admitted that when he afterwards tallied his flock none was missing. Hearing stones fall, he pushed through the sheep, and saw Connor jump from the gloom and strike Richards. He tried to get between them, but Mr. Railton, who had a gun, ordered him not to meddle. Richards tried to defend himself, but his foot slipped in the wet grass and Connor savagely knocked him down the bank.

For the most part, the men in court were moorside folk; and Jim, studying them, noted a sort of grim amusement and imagined they did not think the fight had gone altogether as the shepherd narrated. Richards fixed his eyes on the ground, and as far as possible turned his head from the crowd. At one time, he was a famous wrestler and for long nobody

was keen to dispute with him. Yet a stranger, of lighter build, had put him in the beck. Jim reckoned he hated his master for forcing him into court.

Mike's tale, on the whole, was accurate, and when he was questioned his replies provoked a smile, particularly when he stated he watched behind the wall because he knew the Staneghyll gang. He did not stop the hog-hole. When he got there a large slate was firmly jammed across the tunnel.

Jim supported Mike's statement, and for a minute or two the magistrates pondered. Jim, weighing the evidence, sympathized with them. After all, Richards had rather obviously been assaulted. Then one said:

"The defendant acted rashly. The proper spot for a dispute about damage to a wall is the county court. He was entitled to guard his master's field, but he was not entitled to follow and strike the trespasser. In the circumstances, he must pay a fine of twenty shillings."

The fine was paid by Jim, and when they were in the street Mike laughed.

"Five dollars! At Calgary it would cost ye more. At the price, I would assault the fella' wance a month."

"Another time your luck might turn, and I've heard you talk about stopping while your shoes are good," Jim rejoined. "If you start a fresh rough-house, you yourself must meet the bill."

XX

THE ROAD TO THE HILLS

AT three o'clock on Christmas eve Jim leaned against the rails on the station bridge. A sunbeam sped down the valley, and for a few moments the old church behind the market square was rosy red. Then the bright colour melted and town and hills and river were vaguely blue and dim. Jim felt the wind warm and damp on his skin. On the moors, summer was dark and the fall was bleak; he had thought to see snow at Christmas, but the afternoon was mild. A dog barked in the street below the station and a motor 'bus hooted in the square. The noise hardly disturbed the brooding calm, and Jim pulled out his watch.

In ten minutes the Athertons would arrive, and he waited them with rather excited curiosity. Mark was a regular fellow and Grace a canny lass. Jim admitted he had begun to mix his idioms, but in Cumberland canny did not imply cunning. It vaguely stood for a sort of combination of competent, kind, and good. Anyhow, he had felt that Grace and her old Puritan name harmonized. She was marked by a queer sober charm, and one sensed her sincerity. She was not narrowly righteous, and her calm had nothing to do with pride, but where another might be shabby he saw Grace stand firm.

Jim smiled. After all, the Athertons were at Goldsike for but three or four days, and his romantic impulses had carried him away before. Their meet-

ing in the rain and her care for him when he was hurt, perhaps accounted for some exaggeration. He was flesh and blood, and Grace was an attractive girl. Yet if that were all, he must front something like disappointment. He had thought and wanted to think, her finer stuff than him. Well, the old country railroad men ran their little trains on time, and he soon would know.

A signal clanged and it looked as if the station awoke. Trucks rattled on the platform, passengers crossed the bridge. In the valley, steam floated about the trees, and Jim plunged down the steps. At the bottom, he laughed. The train would not arrive for a minute or two, but he had jumped down the last steps as if he were a boy.

Two locomotives rolled by, the cars stopped, and Grace and Mark got down. Grace carried a pike stick, her dress was heather-coloured cloth, and a red grouse's feather was fastened in her hat. She was grey and brown like a partridge, but somehow smaller and lighter than Jim had thought, and her skin was white. She gave him a frank smile, and he knew he had not exaggerated.

"You are on time, and I expect the pony is waiting at the *Hollybush*. But how long have you got?" he said.

"By special favour, three whole days. We hope to walk about all over the hills," Grace replied.

"That's fine! I have cleared off my chores, and if I'm wanted for a fresh job, I'll rebel," said Jim. "But come on. We must get some tea before we start."

At the top of the bridge Grace stopped and looked about. Thin smoke floated across the little town in the valley; behind it the calm landscape was soft blue and grey, and a moving beam of yellow light touched a hill.

"At length, the wind is clean; Lancashire was rolled in sooty fog," she said. "I don't think we will squander the last of the afternoon at a tea-shop. But we have not thanked you for a better holiday than we had hoped to get."

"The invitation was my uncle's. He pretended to indulge me, but I rather think he indulged himself. If it's some satisfaction, you have captured the old fellow."

"He's a dear," said Grace, and her glance searched the dale. "I hope the pony is not tired, and for you to meet us was not awkward."

Atherton laughed. "For once my sister is not altogether frank. I expect she means she would sooner walk."

"Then we will walk. Bill is in town, and he will drive the pony. But to the dalehead is a long hike, and we must get some tea."

They went to the tea-shop. The waitress gave them the table by the window, and Jim thought she smiled. When he was last there, Kirstine was his companion, and half consciously he knitted his brows. He mustn't be ridiculous, and he imagined Kirstine had allowed him to be her host because at the quiet town young men were not numerous. For twenty minutes he and the Athertons engaged in happy, careless talk. Grace had not Kirstine's disturbing beauty; her charm was serene and homelike. He did not think Kirstine had consciously bothered to work on his emotions; the trouble rather was, when she was about his balance went. Grace did not move him like that, but when she got up he was sorry.

They climbed the hill behind the town and at the top saw the road curve along the waterside and melt in the dim slopes up the dale. A pool shone, level clouds streaked the serene sky, and the river's throb faintly pierced the spacious calm.

"After Manchester, to feel the clean damp on your skin is something fresh," Atherton remarked. "When your business is to sell folks stuff, you must go where money is; but when I'm in the fells, I sometimes think I'd like another job. When the high tops get black and the light melts, you feel the country's a goblin country."

"*Elfin*, I think," said Grace.

"Oh, well, I'm not, as a rule, romantic, but after the blatant tramcars and rumbling lorries, you feel the quiet's not *normal*, and you have plunged into a world where an industrious cotton salesman is a foreigner."

"But Christmas eve is not normal," Grace rejoined. "Where you have time to be quiet, you feel it's different. Gracious is the word, although I mustn't claim it's mine."

Mark laughed. "So long as you are modest; I seem to have heard something like that before. But Goldsike is some distance off, and we must shove ahead."

The road dipped to the river, and when Grace turned her head, the hill they had climbed cut like a black bar across soft yellow light. In front, the dale got bluer and mist trailed about the long dim slopes.

They pushed along steadily; three miles and a half an hour Jim reckoned, and to splash through the water that sometimes trickled across the road did not bother Grace. Jim noted her thick boots and neatly rolled puttees.

"It looks as if you know the hills you hope to walk about," he said.

"It looks as if she had planned to walk up the dale," said Mark. "As a rule, I imagine, a modern young woman goes where she wants, and sometimes gently but firmly steers her friends."

"Sometimes she knows where they ought to go.

At all events, you are happiest when you are on your feet, and Jim does not grumble."

Jim declared it would not bother him if Goldsike were much farther off. But for Hodson and Kirstine Firth, the people he met were shepherds and old men. Grace's society was something fresh and charming, and he liked Atherton. He thought Mark a sensible, industrious young fellow who could but indulge his love for the open when he took a holiday. Pushing on at a steady pace, they indulged in careless banter, and sometimes talked about the things they knew: sheep, and soap, and cotton mills. Although the subjects were not romantic, none was bored, and Jim felt that Christmas eve somehow was different from other evenings. He wondered whether it was altogether because he was young and the girl's quiet voice was musical, but he doubted. One reacted to another's mood; Grace, perhaps unconsciously, helped him sense things that might elude him were she not about.

When they crossed a noisy watersplash and climbed a bank to the church by the wood, pale stars were shining, but behind the western hills the sky yet was red. A bench was built into the wall under a holly tree by the gate, and Jim put his folded mackintosh on the stone for Grace.

"After the steady pull uphill, you have earned a rest," he said.

For a minute or two all was quiet but for the river, and they had climbed a steep bank and were not keen to talk. The church was dark and the memorial cross pushed up its black, circled top against the sky. Then children's voices stole out of the gloom.

"Good King Wenceslaus looked down——"

"The dears! We must listen while they sing for us," said Grace.

By and by the music stopped, and Mark said :

"A children's feast ; or perhaps a rehearsal. But where are they ? And where do they come from ?"

Jim said a little hall stood behind the trees, but he had wondered who went to the lonely church. Grace signed to him to be quiet, and they heard a piano. The music began on slow bass notes that hardly pierced the river's throb, but he knew its triple-beat marching rhythm.

"Wagner !" said Grace in a quiet voice. "One must have an orchestra for the Venusberg, and the river's call strikes a different note. But you know the *Pilgrim's Song*."

Jim pictured the opera house at Toronto and the famous American company. Then he was rawly youthful and the opera had not moved him much. Now, when the music was made by a piano in a little moorside hall, he heard the Pilgrims push steadfastly along. One felt they knew where they were going, and called one to follow. The rising music marked their firm advance and their song got triumphant.

The piano stopped, and he wondered with a sort of boyish embarrassment why he had allowed himself to be carried away. For the most part, he doubted emotional sentiment. Well, Mark was a Manchester salesman, but he thought the fellside an elfin country. It was Christmas eve, and Grace, and another, had declared the time was gracious.

"We didn't reckon on a concert, and I'm sorry she stopped," Atherton remarked. "The touch was a woman's touch. A little village schoolmistress, I expect, but the girl can play."

"And why would she not ? The question's our byreman's favourite rejoinder, but it meets the bill," said Jim. "In American cities, they think the farmers rubes and hicks. At Manchester, I suppose, we are hobnailed clodhoppers ?"

Mark laughed. "I have seen you drawn like that at music halls; but when the market's flat and getting worse, I envy you your job. After all, farming's our oldest industry and among the manliest."

"In the fells, it's the wettest. But I suppose the cotton trade is bad?"

"All the standard trades by which we live are bad. Lancashire forges and machine shops run three or four days a week, cotton spinners write down their capital, and tramp freighters rust in Liverpool docks. In this little crowded country we pay our debts, but our debtors think we ought to let them off. We try to support our sick and old folk and the men who cannot get a job. Very properly; but, however you fix the taxes, all must carry the load, and pay more for rent and food and clothes. In consequence, the stuff we make gets dearer."

"At Ottawa, our politicians reckon the proper line is to shove prices up."

"You are not forced to buy your food abroad, but we have people who use your argument," said Mark. "My hat! Lancashire sells cotton. The Hindu, Chinaman, and negro cannot pay more for his cloth, and when our stuff is dear he goes without; besides, there are mills at Bombay and in Japan. Our mills stop and our workmen walk the streets. A million of them in England, and the cost of all the help we can give them must be put on our goods. Then we lose more customers, and more workmen lose their jobs. I don't see a cure; I believe nobody yet sees a cure, but when I watch a forlorn crowd waiting at a factory gate I'm moved to a sort of protesting rage."

"It is rather dreadful," Grace agreed. "Still, we have fronted a worse crisis, we do try to pay our debts, and the motto of Jim's county town declares that so long as you are just you need not be afraid."

Besides, it's Christmas eve and the children are going to sing again."

The piano began a prelude Jim thought he knew and the children's voices came clearly through the dark.

*"God save you merry, gentlemen.
Let nothing you dismay——"*

After a few moments Grace got up, and when they went down the hill she said:

"I don't know if it was really strange; sometimes things do happen like that. But let's talk about the moors and, for example, sheep. Are you yet at war with the Staneghyll folk?"

"At all events, we are skirmishing," Jim replied, and narrated Mike's exploit. "That was one up for Goldsike, but on the whole, I think Staneghyll wins. In a way, my uncle is handicapped, because he will not use Stoddart's tricks, and he believes the fellow himself is not altogether to blame. The knocks we get do not hurt much, separately; the trouble is, they're numerous, and I have a kind of feeling that old Jim waits. He is a dalesman, and a dalesman's habit is not to forget. In fact, when the old fellow sees a plan I hope to see him out."

Atherton laughed. "The resolve is perhaps not remarkably Christmaslike; but we are human, and when I think about one or two of my chief's competitors, to be cool is hard."

"Fellside folk are a stubborn lot," said Grace. "In a way, one feels you are older than the people in our manufacturing towns."

"Somebody declared we are palæolithic," Jim replied. "In those spacious days, I suppose we'd have laid up for Stoddart with a stone hammer. Now the county constables roam the moors, my uncle must be satisfied to use a fountain pen, but I've

known a bit of stamped paper break a man. In fact, some nicely engraved stock certificates came near to breaking me."

"I hope I'm allowed to state that Mr. Railton is a fine old fellow, but somehow you feel his ancestors' tool was the battle-axe," said Mark. "If I was Stoddart, I think I'd watch my step."

"It does not look as if you and Jim had got the Christmas feeling," Grace observed.

"Oh, well, we would sooner be peaceful, and we do not cheat; but when you try to be honest, some people think you a fool. If they act on the supposition, you are justified to *show* the brutes."

"Now you talk like a Canadian," Jim agreed.

For a few minutes he was quiet and the others said nothing. The road was uphill and the incline was steep. Jim knew them kind and sincere, although Mark had passions like his. Perhaps the contrast accounted for something, but he pictured Firth's watching the culvert at the mill. He banished the picture. After all, Grace was right. He did not know if Firth really knew the plank would break, and the thing was not the sort of thing one ought to think about on Christmas eve.

At the top of the hill, the stone walls vanished, and the road curved about the open moor. The stars were bright and the black hills stood up behind the dalehead. They crossed a ghyll where angry water splashed, and by and by the Goldsike windows shone.

XXI

CHRISTMAS AT THE MOORFOOT

SUPPER was something of a feast. Jim imagined his uncle had not inquired about the bill of fare, and he himself durst not, but he had remarked that Mrs. Hope was for some time unusually occupied. Moreover, he had heard her instructions to the kitchen-maid.

"You'll break four eggs and see you get them from last lot I browt in. Then you'll gan to dairy for t' blue jugful o' thick cream."

Jim imagined old Martha was going to be extravagant, and it looked as if the kitchenmaid agreed.

"Eggs is scarce just now, and two is aw we've used before. Then I doubt if Bella will let me fill t' jug."

"Thoo'll do as thoo's telt, and be quick," Mrs. Hope rejoined. "There's some folk it's a pleasure to cook for, and some you'd like t' food to choke. In Manchester fresh eggs is four weeks old, and if they'd a pint o' cream like ours, they'd sell it for a quart."

Jim stole away. Martha Hope approved her guests and meant to give the best she had got, but in some circumstances he saw her take the sort of line Lady Macbeth might take. He had begun to think the dark hills bred hard folk, and Grace had said one felt they were older than the people of the towns.

Supper was a cheerful function. Since Railton came back from the hydropathic his infirmity had bothered him less, and for all his lined face and white hair, he was, at the end of his table, a commanding

figure. Grace thought the old dark panels his proper background. One smelt the red peat and snapping ash blocks in the grate; polished oak reflected the oil lamp's yellow light. The spacious room was home-like, but she sensed a note of austerity she somehow approved.

Nothing at Goldsike was ambitious and vulgar, and Grace acknowledged Railton a model host. She noted that his nephew's queer aquiline glance now and then rested on her, and she was not annoyed. His face was rather thin, his body was leanly muscular; she did not think him consciously ascetic, but his was not the type that gets soft and fat by indulgence. The Railtons were satisfied to be yeomen farmers; one liked their proud modesty.

Mrs. Hope herself superintended the serving maid and when the plates were removed she said to Grace:

"I hope you liked your supper, miss. I expect it was not what you are used with in a town that's full of shops."

Jim fixed his eyes on the table. Since he knew old Martha, he must not smile. Where she was proudest, she apologized. Grace touched her brother and Mark got up; as if to move some articles the servant could not reach.

"There are in Manchester two or three restaurants where one can get the sort of food you have given us, ma'am, but they are used by company promoters and directors of cotton mills. In fact, if you indulge my sister and me as you have done, you risk our resolving to stop for good."

Railton gave his housekeeper a smile.

"I reckoned you would see me out. And I hope you are satisfied."

The old woman did not turn her head. She fronted Grace and her look was kind.

"When you and Mr. Atherton can take a holiday

you are welcome at Goldsike. I speak for t' master and myself."

She went off and Railton remarked :

"Martha rules my house and my business is to meet the bills ; but I believe they cost me less than another's might. Anyhow, the joint invitation stands."

Gathering round the fire, they began to talk, but by and by Grace asked if she might go to see Bob, and Bella, the dairymaid. Jim went with her to the kitchen and when he presented Mike she was frankly interested. She saw a rather lightly built but muscular man whose clothes were good, and whose step, although he was not young, was light. When one was something of a mountaineer, one noted how people used their feet. She liked his smile, but when it went she noted a touch of melancholy. Nothing she remarked indicated a cowboy swashbuckler, and to picture his putting a powerful antagonist in the beck was hard.

Mike said, in a polite voice, he hoped the quiet weather would stand for her holidays ; and then Grace felt something scrape her dress and a cold touch on her hand. She looked down and saw a handsome white and sable dog at her feet.

"You have not forgotten me, Grey Lad ? " she said.

Grey Lad's lips twisted, as if he smiled, and he beat his tail against the flags.

"They remember, both ways, miss," said Mike. "If ye would be sure of it, ye might hit wan with a stone."

"I would hate to experiment," Grace rejoined.

"Ye would," said Mike. "Sometimes, to take a warning, costs wan less ; but ye would not be needing it, and the folks who might are deaf."

He went to the fireplace and splashing some hot water in a jar, pushed a bottle in his pocket.

"I'll be taking a look at the Angus where she hurt her leg," he said to Jim. "Are ye for the byre?"

"Might I go, Mr. Connor?" Grace inquired. "I was in your byre another time, and I like cattle."

"Sure ye might," said Mike. "The creatures are not to everybody's taste. Will ye be pleased to wait while I get a light?"

He went for his lantern and the dairymaid crossed the floor.

"If you are going, you might slip my pattens over your thin shoes."

Grace pushed her feet into the little clogs, Mike held back the door for her, and Grey Lad noiselessly followed them. Jim noted that when they went down the steps Mike gave her his hand. In a way, it was not important, but Jim wondered——

His uncle's rule was patriarchal; his servants were his household and not altogether hired labourers. They thought themselves entitled to be polite to his guests; but Jim had known Mrs. Hope remark that she had cooked for people whom she wished the food might choke. Then the time, of course, was Christmas eve. All the same, Grace had struck, but not, he thought, by calculation, the proper note. For example, she asked Mike if she might see his byre. So long as Mike properly cared for the cattle, the byre was his. Grace did not know, but she had captured Mike, as she had captured all at Goldsike.

Sitting on a bucket, Jim lighted his pipe. Mike hung his lantern on a beam; the byre was warm, and the light burned mistily in the thin steam that floated about the cattle. Sometimes a milker tossed her head, and sometimes one breathed noisily as if she sighed. Feet moved in the crackling fern; and then for a time all was quiet but for the throbbing beck. Mike and Grace followed the gangway behind

the stalls. Their figures were blurred and indistinct ; their voices floated softly back to Jim.

"You talk about them as if they were people," Grace remarked.

"Any why would I not ? They have their feelings like the rest of us, and they have their names. Ye can talk to them like people, and while I would not claim they know all ye say, they know when ye mean them well. And they will not trust ye if they think ye are afraid."

"Then, they're logical," said Grace in a thoughtful voice.

"Sure they are. Fear is cruel and revengeful. The creature that would hurt us is the wan we would hurt, if we durst. A cow and a horse and a dog will trust ye for yeer confidence."

"There are savage horses and snapping dogs."

"Maybe they had a bad master. I would not say but the animals are kinder than us—— Sthand over, Kate, while I shake up your bed."

A fork rattled on the cement and Jim smiled. Mike did not talk like that to all he met, and Grace, perhaps, had not thought to find the byreman a philosopher.

Jim imagined she was not amused ; he pictured her listening with thoughtful interest. The trouble was, if she indulged him, the fellow might philosophize for the most part of the evening. Mike, however, moved the light and stopped at the next stall.

"The Angus has her leg torn on some barbed wire. She's nervous and the dressing nips," he said. "If ye talked to her quietly, I'm thinking she would sthand. The most convanient spot will be by her head. The black beasts have not horns. Get over, Biddy. Nobody will do ye hurt."

Jim looked up. He ought not to meddle ; the fellow knew his job. Then, so long as Grace was by the manger, she could not be crushed against a post.

Now the light was moved, he saw her go into the stall, and he thought she pushed confidently between the animal and the partition.

The cow's feet trampled in the fern, a chain rattled when she tossed her head, and the timber her large body pressed, cracked. Mike occupied himself with the jar he carried and a small brush; Grace's voice was soothing and even. By and by he signed and she came from the stall.

"They are patient, the large gentle things," she said, and took the jar Mike had used. "Yes, the stuff is a good sterilizer, but I expect it stings. Well, I am glad you allowed me to go round with you. My home is in a crowded town; at all events, the town is where I must work, and I have not before been in a byre on Christmas eve."

"The first that ever was was in a stable," Mike rejoined, and with a quiet gesture indicated the cattle in the stalls. "But for it, we might treat them worse. And I thank ye for yeer help."

Jim got up and when they crossed the yard he stopped for a moment and looked about. The stars were bright and a soft wind murmured in the sycamores.

"The morning will be fine. Where would you and Mark like to go?"

"I don't know about my brother. In winter he starts for his office, and gets back, in the dark," Grace replied. "If I might, I would like to go down the dale and hear the children sing."

"Why, of course," said Jim. "Mark is entitled to a holiday. I don't think we'll invite him, because he might agree in order to be polite, although I dare say he'd sooner go up the fell with Bob."

Grace agreed. Jim's object was rather obvious, but she was not jarred.

When they got breakfast on Christmas morning they were alone in the spacious room, where the light

was not yet good. It looked as if Mark did not know day had broken, and in the dark mornings Railton did not get up soon. When they passed the courtyard arch, the moors hazily cut the luminous yellow sky and a damp south-west wind blew gently up the dale. An hour afterwards, Railton sat down to breakfast by himself.

"The house is quiet, Martha. Where are the young folk?" he said.

"Mr. Atherton has gone up the fell with Bob. Miss Atherton and Mr. Jim took the dale road. I think they went to church," Mrs. Hope replied.

Railton looked up. As a rule, old Martha was not humorous and one could trust her to be discreet, but he thought she smiled.

"Well, well," he said with a twinkle. "I reckon Firth's jade would not have taken the lad there."

Jim and Grace were back for dinner, which, on Christmas day, was served at two o'clock. Although the church was some distance down the dale, Railton calculated they might have arrived before. When Mark got back his clothes were plastered to his knees with spongy moss and peat, but he talked about his glorious walk.

The afternoon was dark, and all were satisfied to loaf and talk by the fireplace. Once or twice Grace sang for Railton, and he told queer tales about the fellside folk. On the whole, the tales were humorous, but Grace thought the humour grim. The old fellow knew men and something about women, and one could see the people whose portraits he drew. Two for three hours debated a fifteen-pounds transaction and then carried a dispute about twenty-five shillings to the county court. A quarrel about three hedgerow oaks stopped for twenty years the economical exchange of some fields, and implied a farmer's carting hay for an extra mile by lanes that were rather like a river-

bed. Yet Railton declared, when the fellsiders trusted you, they were kind, and sometimes generous. He admitted with a twinkle that nobody perhaps was altogether consistent.

Grace, pondering the stories, noted most the stern tenacity of the folk about whom he talked. The large and rather quiet men and women were an indomitable lot. In some circumstances, they might be daunting. She thought Railton himself, and perhaps his nephew, were not altogether different from the others.

"What about your plans for to-morrow?" he asked by and by.

"Wilson is going across Yarbarrow and I thought I'd like to see the pothole where the beck goes underground," Mark replied. "However, I doubt if my sister could cross the bogs."

"She ought not to try. If Wilson steers you, you might, perhaps, get there, and the spot is interesting."

"Mark mustn't bother about me," said Grace. "I really ought to look up my friend at the town, and she knows I am at Goldsike. Then the dale is beautiful and I might go one way in the digby and walk back after lunch."

Jim said it could be fixed, and he wanted to see the station-master.

"I have not yet got him to put straight the overcharge on the milk we sent to Leeds, sir, and it ought not to run on into the new year," he remarked.

Railton agreed, and turning to Atherton, began to talk about the old bobbin mill.

"Sixty years since, Carlisle manufactured cotton, and a canal was cut to carry the raw material from a dock on the Solway. Lancashire competition knocked out the industry, but one or two mills are yet running by a river not far from the town. I

imagine they concentrate on specialities that cost more than common stuff, and the water is particularly suitable for dyeing, and so forth. Do you think Lancashire manufacturers might use the White Scar mill for something of the sort?"

"The cotton industry has two main branches, sir: spinning and manufacturing. The mills, in which the yarn is spun, are large and can earn a profit only where coal and transport to the sea are cheap. I think nobody would expect a mill in a north-country dale to pay. The manufacturers weave the yarn, and since the trade is subdivided, some dye and print the cloth. One or two processes are expensive and are used because more can be got for a first-class, fast-colour article. A small works, manufacturing a high-grade speciality, might perhaps be started in your dale, but I think something would depend on the water. Grace is a chemist——"

"Only carefully distilled water is pure," said Grace. "In some the impurities can be persuaded to precipitate, or to combine chemically with other substances in such a way that the combination is useful to manufacturers. If I'm technical, I might bore you; and the useful fact is, one sort of water dissolves, and sometimes fixes, colour better than another sort."

"What about artificial silk?" Railton inquired.

"I understand the stuff is made from wood pulp," Mark replied. "There are small mills, but you need cheap chemicals. If the White Scar mill were used for weaving, I expect the stuff would be a dyed or printed cotton speciality; but I have heard nothing about a scheme."

Railton thanked him, and when they went off to examine some cups he had won at agricultural shows, Grace turned to Jim.

"Does your uncle mean to buy the mill?"

"He would sooner another did not. In the meantime, I expect that's all."

"Mr. Firth?" said Grace, in a thoughtful voice. "Very well. Do you think you could for a minute or two bear with something like a lecture?"

"If you are the lecturer, I might stand for it," Jim replied. "To take a smoke might help me concentrate."

He lighted a cigarette and Grace resumed:

"I am not a geologist, but when one is a chemist and a mountaineer, one knows something about rocks. The hills where the Staneghyll beck springs are limestone, and lime is particularly soluble in water. Sometimes its presence is a drawback."

"I get that. Staneghyll water carries lime. You might go ahead."

"The crag by the beck marks a fault, where the limestone stops and rocks of another sort were, I suppose, pushed up. The Goldsike rock is different. On the screes the stones break in thin flakes and their colour is reddish——"

Jim nodded. "In consequence, the Goldsike water is different. It does not carry lime?"

"Yes," said Grace demurely, "you are logical. But there is another thing. When Mark and I were at Keswick, we walked across Skiddaw forest and came down to the head of the river on which are the factories Mr. Railton talked about. The rocks at the watershed are like the Goldsike rock, and one tributary runs by an old mine. We were told they got wolfram there. Wolfram, you may perhaps know, is a form of the metal tungsten."

Jim looked up sharply, but he was satisfied to nod, and Grace went on:

"When we sheltered from the rain at your grandfather's mine, I picked up some bits of stone and spar. They were very like the stuff we saw at the other mine."

"By George," said Jim, "you are keen! They did find some wolfram, although it was not the stuff for which they bored. However, the implication is, Gold-sike water ought to be like the water the factories use? And the Staneghyll water is not? Well, we must try to get a sample from the river."

"If you like, we might get the sample to-morrow, and I would engage to have it analysed."

"We certainly will," said Jim. "I'll go for a map——"

He brought the map, and a newspaper, in which a motor 'bus service was advertised. To plan the excursion across the most part of the county was awkward, but they calculated that Grace could visit with her friend for an hour, and they could get back to the market town in the evening. Then Grace ordered Jim to put up the map.

"In the meantime, I think we will say nothing to Mr. Railton, and I don't know if cotton mills and chemistry are subjects one talks about on Christmas afternoon."

When the light went Hodson came across, and the evening went tranquilly while they talked by the fire. At ten o'clock Railton went to bed and Hodson got up.

"In the morning I am going down the dale, and shall be at Shap until the afternoon," he said to Jim. "If you like, I can put you down where Miss Atherton wants, and I might fix to meet you in the evening at the market-square."

Jim thanked him and soon after he went off, all went to bed.

XXII

A WINTER EXCURSION

SOON after daybreak Grace and Jim got on board Hodson's car. At one o'clock, they got down in a quiet road from the second motor 'bus they had used since they started from the town. Their line was across the trunk roads, and Jim thought their reaching the spot something of an exploit.

"We have made it; the map's a bully map," he said. "If I measured properly, the river is five miles off."

"I hope you are sure about our getting back," said Grace.

"You checked up the programme," Jim rejoined. "If the 'buses run on time, we have three and a half hours, and as soon as we see the proper spot we will stop for lunch. We take the small road to the left; I marked it on the map."

The road went downhill and was torn by wheels where somebody had hauled timber from a wood. Grace's mountain boots were thick, and when they ploughed through mud and splashed in pools she did not grumble. After a time she climbed the steep hedgebank, and Jim, pulling out some sandwiches and a vacuum flask, threw down an old cartridge bag and his folded mackintosh. Grace put hers on top and when they sat down she looked about.

The spot was lonely. A mile off, two or three cottages and a white farmstead occupied a knoll. When she looked the other way, the high Pennine moors

rolled North like a rather uneven grey wall. She could not see the dale where Goldsike was, but she reckoned the market town twenty miles off. They had stopped just below the top of a high tableland, buttressed on its western slope by small limestone crags. Across the valley in front, but six or seven miles off, was a hill with a level flat on its summit, and farther back the vague heights of Skiddaw forest cut the sky. Slow clouds floated up from the South-West and colours were dim, but for a few minutes a sunbeam touched the dale and water sparkled.

"There's our river," Grace remarked. "A stream comes down a gully by the queer-shaped hill, which Mark and I climbed. The flat top is surrounded by piled stones, as if a giant had pushed over a tremendous wall. So far as we could find out, nobody knows if it was at one time an early-British camp, but we doubted if the stones could be carried there by natural forces."

Jim noted that Grace was willing to think and talk about things like that. He imagined some young women, and some young men, for the most part thought about their clothes and experimented with sex attraction. Yet she was attractive, and seductive form and harmonious colour might carry one away. They, however, were not all; one might, for example, look for help and trust and sympathy. Woman was man's partner, and as a rule, a man's main business was to labour for house and food. Jim smiled and reflected that Grace very probably did not want a partner.

"We are yet on limestone; you can see the white outcrop pierce the grass," she resumed. "The road we left follows the watershed and behind us the becks run the other way. The rocks across the valley are harder stuff, and the streams they feed run to our river. It really is remarkably like Staneghyll and Goldsike."

"The remarkable thing is, you remarked the likeness," Jim replied. "However, now I think about it, I don't know if I'm polite. Let's say if you hadn't done so, one would have felt you ought—— But I'm getting entangled. Will you take another sandwich?"

Grace laughed. "I try to be modest. At the laboratory one is not encouraged to boast."

"They are jealous," said Jim. "The English point of view's peculiar. When you know you've got a good thing, you pretend to apologize. We inquire frankly: Can you beat it? For instance, the sandwiches are bully sandwiches. If you want another, you'll have to speed up."

Twenty minutes went, and when Jim pulled out his watch Grace nodded.

"Yes; the afternoons are short, and we ought to start."

For some time they went up and down by winding lanes. Tall hazels grew in the hedgerows, and clumps of birch and mountain-ash cut one's view. Jim could not altogether see where he steered, but on the whole the lanes went obliquely downhill and he fronted North-West. All was very quiet and the soft grey clouds hardly moved. A horse pushed its head across a gate and whinnied as if it were tired of loneliness and wanted to go with them. A rabbit sped across the lane and vanished in a hole, and where muddy sheep were folded behind nets a man swung rhythmically by a turnip cutter. For a minute or two they heard the machine crunch the roots, and then the noise melted in the brooding calm.

They talked about their occupations. Grace said she as a rule met Mark at week-ends and they went to a concert or a play. The soapworks was twenty miles from Manchester, and they could not be extravagant. Her father and mother were dead, and she and another girl had rooms at a house under the walls of a brewery.

One smelt the warm malt, but it was sweeter than the smell of the tanyards that tainted other parts of the town, and their landlady was a dear old thing. She did not go about much. At the laboratory one was forced to concentrate, and when she got home in the evening she was tired.

She frankly stated that none of the Athertons was rich, and Jim imagined her studies at a famous college had cost her small inheritance. Yet it looked as if she fronted her laborious life with the sober cheerfulness that marked all she did ; and she was cultivated. Jim admitted she knew much about music, and pictures, and so forth, that he did not. Then she did not grumble about the wet road and boggy grass, and he was not forced to wait for her when they went uphill. In fact, she was altogether a jolly companion for a country walk.

At the bottom of the last hill they took a path across long wet meadows, where clumps of rushes and little pools dotted the grass. In front, the hill with the flat top got indistinct and Blencathra's rocky crest melted in soft clouds. All was dim and calm, and a small, pale river looped about the quiet fields. Where a stony bank went down to a pool Jim pulled out a large bottle and put the cartridge bag on the stones.

"We can stop for ten or fifteen minutes, and when I have got the sample, I think I'll take a smoke. Ought the bottle to be washed?"

"It was washed at Goldsike. If we had used the flask, the caffeine alkaloid might have puzzled the analyst."

"Your habit is to make a proper job," said Jim.

"Science is exact ; at all events, it is exact as possible," Grace remarked. "Take the water where the stream is slow and deep."

Jim did so and rubbed his hands on his trousers.

"The cork is not a first-class fit. When my fingers are dry I'll give the thing an extra twist."

"Does a man use his clothes for a towel?" Grace inquired.

"Something depends on the clothes, and perhaps on where he is. In Manchester, for example, it might be rash."

Grace laughed and glanced about. The afternoon got darker, and but for the current's faint splash at the tail of the pool all was strangely calm.

"It looks as if nobody was ever here and we had reached a land where nothing changes. Well, we rather stole away, and I wonder whether we might not have told Mr. Hodson where we went."

"I reckon Wat wanted to know. In fact, if we had tactfully suggested it, he might have run out to meet us. Wat is a good sort, but I felt I could go without his society."

Grace smiled, but her look got thoughtful.

"You did not inform him. Nobody knows where we went, and we mustn't risk our missing the 'bus."

Jim pulled out his watch and lighted a cigarette.

"You can rest for ten minutes; and then we'll have plenty time."

He did not want to go, and he imagined Grace was willing to stop; but by and by he threw his cigarette in the river and gave her his hand.

"We are not forced to hustle. You can hit the pace you like."

They crossed the fields, and when they climbed a stile in a wall Jim jumped into the road. Stopping with a frown, he pulled round the cartridge bag.

"The blasted bottle!" he remarked.

"Oh, Jim!" said Grace. "Is it broken?"

"I'd like to break it," Jim replied. "I reckon it's at the creek, and I'm going back. You know the road

and you mustn't wait. In twenty minutes I ought to pick you up."

Grace blocked the stile. She wanted Jim to ponder, but seizing the top stone, he swung his legs up strongly and dropped on the other side. In a moment he was fifty yards off, his head tilted back, his fists clenched, and water splashing about his boots. His hat and his mackintosh were in the road. When Grace picked up the articles she frowned.

Jim liked action; the phrase was his, but he ought to calculate. The fields were wet and the grass was soft. If he got back to the stile in half an hour, he must go fast, and when he arrived she would yet be half an hour in front. She saw one or two other things he ought to have weighed.

All the same, she went slowly up the hill and sometimes stopped, but the tall hedgerows cut her view. The 'bus they had fixed to get was the last for the day. Yet one must not be shabby, and Jim must not think her a selfish prig, and, so to speak a prude.

At length, boots splashed in boggy soil and she heard laboured breath. A thin hedge crashed, and Jim leaped down the bank. Stopping in front of her, he flourished the bottle.

"Got it!" he gasped. "I cut out a bend by crossing the field—— But you carried my coat? You certainly are a sport!"

"I carried your hat. You perhaps forgot," said Grace. "I wonder whether you know you have torn your clothes?"

Jim pushed one leg behind the other. He thought he had felt the torn cloth flap.

"When you don't know where it is, barbed wire's treacherous stuff. I'll take your load, and we must shove ahead."

He seized Grace's arm and for half an hour they did not talk. The lanes went uphill, and the inclines

were steep. At length, when they were near the top, light flickered along the ridge's crest and they heard wheels.

"A lorry, I expect. One gets to know their rattle," said Jim. "Two or three minutes will carry us to level ground."

They reached the main road and Grace leaned breathlessly against a wall. Dusk had fallen, but about a mile off a trembling beam flickered in the gloom. When she looked the other way, all was dark.

"Our 'bus! The last for the evening," she said in a tired voice.

"Yes, it's awkward," Jim agreed. "However, we are not yet beaten, and cars can be hired. I dare say we will find out something useful at the houses on the hill."

Grace braced up and they rather forlornly took the road. One of the three or four cottages was a baker's shop, and a woman was occupied at an oven in the flagged kitchen. When Jim inquired, she said she sometimes supplied excursionists with tea, and she had some fresh cakes. The 'bus was the last and nobody in the neighbourhood had a car, but a blacksmith at a village four miles off carried passengers to the markets and farm sales, and if they crossed a common, they might shorten the distance by a mile.

"There's our plan," Jim said to Grace. "In the meantime, you have got to rest."

The woman gave them tea and food, and left them alone. Jim, with a spoon, drew a map on the tablecloth.

"This line is the trunk road to Scotland, which we must cross," he said. "It goes by Penrith and Carlisle, and I expect the fast through 'buses run frequently."

"But neither town is near Goldsike. And do the express 'buses stop for local passengers?"

"I'd engage to force one to stop," said Jim. "However, I expect we can persuade the blacksmith to drive us to the *Hollybush*, where Hodson will wait for us."

"Since the day is a holiday, the smith might be at Penrith or Carlisle."

"If we cannot find him, we could walk to the trunk road," Jim replied in an apologetic voice.

Grace hesitated. Jim thought a touch of colour stained her skin, but she said quietly:

"If we got to Carlisle, we would be forced to wait for morning. Penrith is nearer Goldsike, but you might not find a garage man willing to cross the hills on a winter night. It is awkward, Jim. You see, nobody knows where we went. We rather stole away——"

"You are afraid it might look as if we had eloped?" said Jim, smiling. "Well, neither old Jim nor Martha Hope is noticeably a fool, and I reckon both have studied you. Then I might claim that they have by this time some grounds to know me. However, I will not labour the argument. I mustn't state that in no circumstances——"

"You mustn't bother to be laboriously polite," said Grace. "Let's be practical. I hope you have some money. When Mark and I take a holiday, he keeps the purse. All I have got is two-and-sixpence."

Jim pulled out two ten-shilling notes and three shillings.

"There's my wad. One could not elope far on a sum like that. Well, but for the blasted bottle, we'd have got home all right, and since I forgot the thing, to see you do so is up to me. Sooner than be beaten, I'd steal a car."

"Although you cannot drive? I am not altogether sorry if you are annoyed, but I don't think you ought to blame the bottle."

Jim asked for some more tea. After all, Grace had

some grounds to be disturbed. Yet she was not nasty, and in the circumstances, he liked her pluck. After a few minutes she got up.

"We ought to start," she said. "I suppose the bottle is in the cartridge bag?"

After getting directions from the woman, they set off. The evening was rather dark, and at some spots thin mist floated about the fields. Where a wood bordered the road, big drops splashed the stones. Rotten twigs cracked under their boots, they ploughed through drifted dead leaves, and sometimes across wet grass. The trees presently rolled back and in open country the road was plainer. For the most part Grace did not talk, and when Jim climbed a stile in a dry wall, she was glad to rest on the slabs. Jim, on the top, saw for about a hundred yards dark heather and clumps of whins.

"The common, rather obviously," he remarked. "The woman declared the path is good, and we cut out a mile, but we musn't reckon on her being accurate. She stated the blacksmith's was four miles from her shop. We have gone four miles, but I certainly do not see a village."

Grace did not. The wall went gently downhill and melted in the gloom; a small oak's tangled branches cut the sky, and a streak of breast-high mist floated across the common. That was all.

"Let's risk it," she said. "A mile is something, and I'm getting tired."

Jim helped her over the wall and for a time they made good progress. Then long heather clung about their boots, they ploughed through rushes, and Grace splashed in a pool. She thought the evening darker and the mist in front got thick.

"Oh, Jim, we have lost the path," she said.

"It's possible," Jim agreed. "In Cumberland, a path is any sort of track on which you don't altogether

sink in the mud, and in winter you might think one or two I know were becks. All the same, a road goes along the common's other side, and we are going to get there."

He gave her his hand and they stubbornly pushed ahead. Grace wondered whether he knew where he steered, for she herself did not. At all events, he did not hesitate, and before long she thought a straight, dark object in front might be a telegraph pole. Then a fan-shaped beam leaped out of the dark, and advancing fast, touched a hedge with silver light.

"Come on!" said Jim. "I must hold up that motorist."

He went fast, his hand shifted to her shoulder, and she was running for the hedge. Had she wanted to stop, she imagined he would not have allowed her, but she knew where something must be risked, and the advancing headlamps got dazzlingly bright. In front wet thorns and willows sparkled, she felt Jim swerve, as if he looked for an easy spot; and then she imagined he flung her across the hedge.

Thin branches smashed and they plunged into the road. Grace was on her feet, Jim rolled in the grass, but he jumped up and the engine stopped. Wheels skidded, and a man looked out from the front of a grocery van.

"I thowt I was over you! What might you want?" he said.

"We lost our 'bus and the lady's tired," said Jim. "Are you going near the village where there's a blacksmith's shop?"

"I'm going through't. Get up, unless you'd sooner go inside and sit on flour sacks."

"We would not," said Grace, and they got up in front beside the young fellow.

"You've been bank-holidaying, likely?" he remarked when he started the engine. "My girl wanted

to gan t' Keswick, and I doubt she wasn't pleased, but when you have got a good trade-round you musn't let your customers buy from another van. Your young lady's luckier——"

Jim stopped the fellow. He wondered whether Grace laughed, but the engine was noisy. He narrated their adventures and the driver cogitated.

"Blacksmith was going to hound trail and there's a supper afterwards," he said. "Noo let me see— If you come on to Gaitsgarth, you could get Skirton 'bus. I've but two-a-three calls to make, and I'se get you there in time."

He drove faster, and after a time put them down at a cross-road where they presently stopped a 'bus. Fifty minutes later, they got down in the market-place, and Jim admitted to see Hodson on the pavement was some relief.

"I waited," said Wat. "The night is cold and Miss Atherton and you had better take the back. A rug is on the seat. Let's get off!"

The engine roared and the battered car leaped ahead. Jim pulled the rug round Grace, and when they rocked about on the hill road steadied her with his arm. Grace said nothing; she slackly swayed against him, and he thought she slept. Well, he was justified to guard her against the jolts, and when her head sank on his shoulder his arm went round her waist.

XXIII

RAILTON PONDERS

GRACE returned to Lancashire in a thoughtful mood. After a holiday in the hills, to get to work was irksome, but when the holiday was at Gold-sike the effort to concentrate was harder than before. She liked her stern host and his quiet spacious house ; when one came down from the moors by Kinder Scout, the inns at which one sometimes stopped were crowded by noisy young city folk. Railton's servants and his live-stock interested her ; but since one must try to front things squarely, she acknowledged that was not all. Perhaps the trouble rather was she liked Jim Railton, and she moreover imagined he had not wanted to let her go.

She pondered their excursion. Nothing romantic had marked it, but until she knew their 'bus was gone she was happy. Then she was for a time worse embarrassed than she had admitted. After all, Railton knew but little about her and she would have hated him to think her willing to entangle his nephew. Jim, however, had got action, and when she thought about it at the soapworks, their plunge across country in the dark was a first-class thrill, although its climax was frankly humorous. It looked as if Jim threw her over the hedge, and although she was not largely built, he must have used some force. She alighted on her feet ; he rolled across the road's grassy edge as if he were shot, and the startled vanman swore.

But the part of the excursion she pondered most was

their journey up the dale on board the car. Fatigue and cold accounted for something, but she was not, as Jim no doubt thought, altogether asleep; anyhow, she was not asleep all the time. She knew his arm was round her, and to rest against him under the rug was comforting. Now she tried to recapture her emotions she was perplexed and annoyed.

Her father and mother were dead; her education had cost all they could give. She must stand on her own feet, but since she had some talent, she hoped to advance. In order to do so, she must keep the path she had chosen and not indulge in romantic experiments. If she made her mark, she might think about marriage, with, for example, a man who had made his. In the meantime, she did not want a lover. Girls she knew who boasted about their lovers moved her to impatience and something like disgust.

Yet it looked as if she, like them, was flesh and blood. She did not want a lover, but, unless she was firm, she might want Jim Railton. Although the difference was not very obvious, there was a difference. Well, so long as she was firm, she need not refuse him for her friend. At all events, she had engaged to analyse two samples of water from Cumberland becks, and in order to be exact as possible, she asked the head chemist's help.

Jim's reflections were rather like those which Grace indulged. Now his friends were gone the house was dreary, and when he came back from the hill in the evening he brooded by the fire. Before he could support a wife some time must go, and in the circumstances he must, as far as possible, concentrate on his job. To dwell on Grace's tranquil, satisfying charm was rash, and he was not going to do so. He was, in fact, not going to be a sentimental fool. At Easter she and Mark might come back. Easter would not arrive for fourteen weeks, but sometimes when he was

on the hills he planned their excursions to spots he thought Grace ought to see.

The new year dawned bleakly on white-topped moors and flooded pastures, but when three or four dark days were gone Jim got bracing news. To begin with, the White Scar estate was advertised for public sale at a date two or three weeks in front, and when he got back from the fell one stormy evening, he found two letters on the table in the panelled room. Jim got a light, and thought his uncle, sitting by the fire, gave him an interested glance.

One envelope was large and carried a Canadian stamp. Jim's curiosity was excited, but he knew Grace's hand on the other, which he opened first. The letter was calmly friendly. Jim admitted a queer annoyance, because he felt Grace had tried to strike just the proper note. Anyhow she had done so, and he was willing for old Jim and Martha to see the letter.

She asked him to renew her thanks to Mr. Railton and Mrs. Hope for a splendid holiday, and she hoped Mr. Railton would soon recover from his lameness. Then she stated :

"I have had the two samples—A from Goldsike beck, and B from the river we visited—analysed. The samples, as you will note by the percentage tabulation, are very much alike, which was to be expected since the streams spring from similar rock. In each case, the water is rather unusually pure, but the inorganic impurities do not vary much. In consequence, my expert adviser agrees that for any manufacturing process for which one was used the other would be suitable ; but a hard, limestone water, for example, the Staneghyll water, would not. He states that although one can precipitate harmful substances and supply, synthetically, others we require, natural fluids have yet advantages that do not altogether depend on

their cheapness, which accounts for some manufactures flourishing at particular localities——”

Jim tore the larger envelope, and pulled out a letter from Redmayne, one or two documents, and a draft on a London bank for five hundred pounds. Pushing all together, he lighted a cigarette, and for a few moments looked straight in front. Then he turned to Railton.

“I haven’t yet told you where Miss Atherton and I went in the holidays, because before we talked about it, we wanted to try out her surmise. Now, if you will allow me to explain, I think you’ll be interested.”

Railton acknowledged the explanation clear and logical, and when Jim gave him Grace’s letter he reached for his spectacles. For three or four minutes he knitted his brows and his mouth was tight. Then he looked up.

“The lass has qualities. She tries not to be technical and reckons on our using some intelligence. Manufactures that depend on a water supply do flourish at certain localities ; for example, some famous breweries. However, the important thing is, she believes Goldsike water would dissolve dyestuffs and fix the colours in woven material——”

He pulled off his spectacles and gave Jim a stern smile.

“Since he married my half-sister Firth has hated, and where he durst, persecuted me. Now I reckon it’s going to stop. You and the lile lass have helped me baffle, and perhaps smash, the swine. Since he’s as cunning as he’s unscrupulous, it’s something of an exploit.”

“After all, Miss Atherton is a chemist, sir.”

“And you were at Canada’s leading University ? ”

“The McGill satchems might not agree,” Jim rejoined.

“However, Firth, so to speak, calculated mechanically ; his notion was, a factory would get cheap

power from the Staneghyll beck, but Miss Atherton argued like a chemist. Still we don't yet know if he really imagines a factory will be built."

"We will soon know," said Railton. "If the fellow was resolved to annoy me, he would, I dare say, buy White Scar for a price at about its agricultural value. If he has somehow heard about, or is trying to start, a manufacturing scheme, he might risk a much larger sum, although I expect he'd be forced to borrow the money. Anyhow, I'll risk forcing the competition."

Jim nodded. The old fellow's plan was obvious; he was going to allow Firth's greediness to carry him away. When Firth found he had a keen competitor, he would imagine Railton knew as much as he knew and was resolved to cut him out.

"But if some speculators thought about floating a company, their agent would be at the sale. He might, indeed, negotiate privately before the sale."

"That is so," Railton agreed. "It's where I'm puzzled. Still Firth himself might be their agent. Besides, he might hope to float a company, or perhaps a flotation syndicate, and know whom he could interest when the estate was his. Well, if he gets White Scar, it will cost him something."

"There's another thing, sir," said Jim. "My pal in Alberta has sold my stock and land that was not mortgaged, and now the lawyers have put all straight, I have five hundred pounds."

"Could you in the North-West gather up a fresh herd, or buy a wheat farm, if all you had was five hundred pounds?"

"On the whole, I doubt," Jim replied. "Land-agency boosters might declare it a soft job; but when you know the country you know the drawbacks. How could one best use the sum in England?"

Railton gave him a keen glance.

"You imply that you are resigned to stop? Well,

you might buy war loan, but when one is young independence has some charm. Yet it's expensive and your capital is small. For a speculation, you might buy lambs; they would help to push back Stoddart's lot, and I would not charge you for their food. When prices are good, to fatten some on rented turnip fields in the low dale might pay."

"You are kind, sir. The Goldsike *heaf* ought to carry all the sheep it can feed. If some are mine, your flock must be smaller."

"In a way, you are logical," Railton agreed with dry humour. "My notion is, nobody altogether knows how many sheep an open *heaf* will feed. Something depends on your shepherds and on your neighbours. However, the time to buy lambs is autumn, and when it arrives you will perhaps know better if you'd like to stop for good. In the meantime, you might put the money on deposit at a bank."

"Very well," said Jim. "Suppose some manufacturers wanted to build a mill by the Goldsike beck? Would you sell them ground?"

"If the scheme were an honest scheme, promoted by honest people, I might. I should ask a large price, and if they refused I would not grumble; but I would sooner take my profit on the live-stock the fields now feed."

Jim pondered. He could not calculate the sum one ought to get for a factory site, ground for workmen's cottages, water-rights and way-leaves, but he imagined Railton could. His frugal relation was an English landlord and it looked as if he were something of an aristocrat. Perhaps it was strange, for Jim was to some extent Canadian, but he frankly approved. Railton gave him a sort of understanding smile.

"We are statesman farmers. Our job is useful. Forty million people are packed in this small country, and we durst not buy all our food abroad. Then you

crossed South Lancashire, and I expect you studied the landscape? We will use it for an example. There are uglier industrial belts."

"If Cumberland was like that, sir, I'd have gone back by the first boat."

Railton nodded. "Our landlords are yet the trustees for England's quiet spots, where people tired by the cities may go soberly on their feet. I would not defile Goldsike for money; but for the men who cannot find work I might. All the same, I hope I shall not be forced."

Mrs. Hope carried in supper and they talked about something else.

Four or five days afterwards, when Jim was in the market square one afternoon, he saw Kirstine Firth. She signalled and he went across. Since he last met her two or three months had gone, and he admitted with vague annoyance that her charm was as marked as at the beginning. It was not altogether her beauty; Jim did not know if she was really beautiful, but she forced one to be interested. She carried herself with a queer, insolent grace; her scornful moods were puzzlingly attractive. In fact, she was dominating, and although Jim had sometimes rebelled, now he again fronted her he angrily admitted a disturbing thrill.

"Hello," she said carelessly, "the rain and mud have not knocked you out. In fact, when one studies you, you have a rude virility that did not mark the gilded youth I met in town. However, the Goldsike Railtons are notoriously a hard, or hardy, lot."

"It's possible," said Jim. "I hope I'm permitted to state that after three months in town, you are as fresh as when you roamed the fells."

"Oh, well, I suppose I asked for it. In up-to-date circles, vulgarity is allowed, and I have known *fresh* used in its Canadian sense. Anyhow, I am not keen

about laboured compliments, and I know my charm. Once or twice I imagined you, in a manner, resented it."

Jim's face got red. Kirstine was horribly clever, but it looked as if she remarked his embarrassment, for she laughed.

"Suppose we let it go? One ought never to explain. At home there is nothing for me to do and I'd begun to feel rather bored. If you invited me to join you, I would not refuse."

They went to the tea-shop. The afternoon was cold and dreary, and if Kirstine thought he might amuse her, Jim was willing to be polite.

"You were at the lawyer's," she said by and by. "Old Jim is perhaps forced to keep his room. His habit is not to trust another with business he can himself transact."

"The business was mine," said Jim.

He told her about Redmayne's letter, although he felt his doing so was strange. He did not want to boast, and he had not much to boast about, because the ranch he had lost was worth a larger sum than five hundred pounds. Somehow Kirstine pierced one's reserve, and if her curiosity were excited, she forced one to indulge her. For a moment she studied him thoughtfully, and then she laughed.

"I wonder whether you know your luck," she said. "You might, before you went gloriously broke, enjoy a crowded month in town, or perhaps at Monte Carlo. In fact, I do not know if you would go broke. Sometimes a beginner wins, and if you are something of a Puritan, your qualities help. Puritans of the proper, old-fashioned type are a firm-nerved lot."

"You stated I was a Goldsike Railton," Jim remarked. "The consequence is, my money's at the bank."

"Oh, well, I rather admitted I waited for you, and

I had an object. Old Jim is not generous, and so long as he is on his feet, you will not use much control. He might, of course, be drowned in a flood, but I dare say he will keep control for the next ten years."

"I did not take the post because I hoped to inherit."

"Not at all," said Kirstine. "In fact, I wonder whether you would not like another."

Jim gave her a puzzled look. Kirstine smiled and began to talk. Friends in the Midlands wanted a bailiff for a model farm. The man was a shipowner and the farm he had bought as part of a small estate was a hobby. He rather wanted to win prizes at agricultural shows than to earn a profit, but he did know something about horses. The pay was good; Kirstine thought it better than the pay Railton's superintendent could hope to get, and when Jim knew the sum he agreed. Moreover, he could, if he liked, have for himself a small but pretty house.

"Do you imply that you could get the post for me?" he asked.

"I suppose it looks strange? Yet I really think I might, particularly if you used some tact when you were interviewed. You see, the farm is to be a show place, and your employer would like to talk about his Ayrshire that carried off the dairy prize, and the colt he is training for a steeplechaser. I believe he would like to talk about his bailiff, and does not want the hobnailed byreman type. Well, your folk are yeomen, and after all, we dalesfolk carry a stamp that does not mark some city gentlemen I know. What about your asking for the job?"

"I don't yet know," Jim replied in a quiet voice. "One mustn't be shabby and I'd hate to feel I had in any way let down old Jim. Anyhow, you have my thanks. And you're very kind."

"Kinder than you thought? I wonder, Jim. The Cumbrian's motto is, you never know. But, until

you make up your mind, you must not talk to your uncle. For a few days it might wait. When will you be in town?"

Jim told her and she got up.

"Very well. I will not persuade you. You must weigh things."

She went off and Jim went for the pony.

XXIV

JIM'S REFUSAL

KIRSTINE went home from the tea-shop. Although the afternoon was bleak she did not go fast, and when the vicar's wife signalled her to stop she did not know. Her emotions were queerly mixed, for scornful impatience was softened by a touch of malicious humour. Kirstine could see a joke, although its subject were herself.

Half a mile from the town, tall iron gates guarded an opening in a thick holly hedge. The old red house behind the hedge had some beauty, and at one time the garden was famous, but now the bare trees tossed in the wind and dusk was falling, Kirstine felt its dreariness. Dead leaves yet drifted about the lawn, moss encroached upon the gravel, and one sensed insidious and rather melancholy neglect.

A light burned behind a window on the second floor, and Kirstine looked up and frowned. Her father was in his study and she guessed how he was employed. Sometimes she thought she would sooner he haunted the *Hollybush* where live-stock salesmen and flock-masters took their liquor publicly.

In Firth's study old leather and old walnut harmonized. Old books, for the most part in leather bindings, occupied a wall; on the opposite wall were two good examples of a Victorian landscape painter's art. Firth's clothes were fastidiously good; his colour was rather high, but he carried the stamp of cultivation and a sort of florid charm.

When Kirstine came in he looked up from his easy chair. She thought him sober, but sometimes one did not know, and she noted the line the yellow liquor marked across the fine cut glass. The line had recently sunk two or three inches, although the old decanter was large.

"You are home soon," she said.

"That is so," Firth agreed. "One must satisfy one's clients, but after carrying on for the most part of the day a dispute about two sheep, I began to feel I'd had enough. Pettifogger is not a flattering term, but I have thought it accurate. However, I have something for you. The *Modiste* states that, getting no reply from you, she sends the bill to me."

Kirstine took the envelope and shrugged. She and her father did not jar. Both were frankly selfish, but to some extent each reckoned on the other's support.

"I must satisfy the woman, and I think I can engage that she pays for her greediness."

Firth nodded. If he were a milliner, he would not offend Kirstine.

"Oh, well, I cannot meet your debts, and your income ought to see you out. Frank, I suppose, has compounded with the money-lenders. You, however, were your aunt's legatee, and when I married it looked as if I could be generous. James Railton, no doubt, saw the joke, since he was resolved the small sum, tied up by deed of settlement, was all my wife should get. I have for thirty years carried on a lawyer's business, but I acknowledge the d—— shepherd a cleverer man than me."

He drained his glass and brooded, but Kirstine asked :

"Do you think young Jim will inherit Goldsike?"

"In one of two circumstances it's very possible: If he remains a bachelor, or if he marries a girl his uncle approves. I dare say you see the stipulation

is important? Then the fellsiders' habit is supposititiously to live for ever."

"Although he has some attractive qualities, I have not yet thought about marrying young Jim. But White Scar will soon be sold. Are you going to buy?"

"I might," said Firth. "In fact, if I can do so, I begin to think my luck will turn. The trouble is, Railton will be my competitor. Still he does not know my object, and since he's parsimonious, I doubt if he'd risk a large bid in order to baffle me. All the same, I would sooner his nephew had not arrived when I took some measurements at the mill."

He frowned and for a moment passion darkened the red in his face. As a rule, he was urbane, but Kirstine, watching him, felt as if something primitively savage had pushed up from the depths. However, she had known herself moved like that.

"Then, you are planning to use the old mill?"

"I durstn't boast, but I begin to think the plan will work, and I shall no longer be forced to argue pettifogging claims at the county court. You must not ask for particulars; nobody must yet know about the scheme. All the same, I see a way in which you might help. If you could separate the Railtons— To work on the old fellow's dislike for us might not be hard. Then youth is independent, and the lad might be persuaded to rebel——"

"My part is not attractive," Kirstine remarked, in a queer, cool voice. "A fellside shepherd is not the sort of husband I would choose, and if Jim Railton married me, he must let Goldsike go. But you think I might, to some extent, *entangle* him, and force old Jim to meddle? If he is not very different from others, I believe I might——"

For a moment or two she looked straight in front. Then she asked, sharply:

"Is it important? Are you afraid of the boy?"

"I am afraid of old Jim," Firth admitted. "In a way perhaps, I'm superstitious, but from the beginning the fellow has baffled me. One Railton is an awkward antagonist; I doubt if I could front two combined. Yet if I can get White Scar and hold on for the next two or three months, I believe I shall have done with them. And if you are extravagant, I will not grumble."

"Very well," said Kirstine, "for your sake, I must try to steer young Jim along the primrose path." She laughed, but her voice was hard when she resumed: "I doubt if his advance will be impetuous. And I shall fix where he must stop."

Jim, driving home in the winter dusk, pondered and sometimes frowned. His help was useful at Goldsike, but that perhaps was all, and his uncle could engage a competent man for six or seven dollars a week. If he took the post Kirstine talked about, he would rule a model farm and be free to use his talents as he liked. After all, he had some talent. Then the pay was generous, and he would get a house. He could, in fact, support a wife, and he did not imagine Grace Atherton would be exacting—

He looked up with a crooked smile. He had thought to see the railway lights, but they were behind the hill, three miles back down the dale. He had no grounds to think Grace would marry him; she was a first-class chemist and ambitious about her career. Besides, to use one girl's gift in order to court another was not a noble part. The post was Kirstine's gift; she had stated that she could get it for him if he liked.

At Goldsike he was but a servant, and independence had some charm. All the same, he had asked his uncle for a job and the old fellow would soon need him more. He did not know if he would inherit Goldsike; anyhow, for long perhaps, the farm would not be his, and he refused to think about it.

The pony laboured up a hill. At the top he saw a holly tree and the dark memorial cross. In the wall was the bench where he and the Athertons had stopped to hear the children sing. The pony was tired, and for a minute or two he allowed the animal to rest.

When they stopped on Christmas eve somebody had played the *Pilgrims' song*, and if one listened, the river somehow sang like that, rising and falling with a steady triple beat. Grace had talked about the Venusberg. So long as one's blood was red, the Venusberg did call. It stood for soft indulgence, the easy road, and the lusts of the flesh. The easy road went downhill, but one pictured the Pilgrims stubbornly pushing along the other way.

Behind the yews and hollies, the cross lifted its circled head, and on its plinth was carved a verse that stated one came home at eventide. Jim had felt he had come home, but for him the evening was not yet. His road went on. Perhaps the important thing was to know, at the end of the journey, he had kept the proper track.

It looked as if his metaphors and emotions were getting mixed, and he started the pony. The hills were his home and he had got a man's-size job. He was not going down to the flat, grass country to help a rich loafer pretend he farmed. So far as he was able, he must see old Jim out.

There was another thing. He did not know if Firth had known the plank would not carry him across the mill lead, and he reckoned he would not find out. His thinking it possible was perhaps ridiculous. Anyhow, Kirstine had nothing to do with it, and if old Jim broke her father, she, to some extent, must pay. He had frankly no use for Firth, but Kirstine was kind and had tried to get for him a post she thought he would like. In consequence, Firth must be warned to leave White Scar alone. Since Jim

meant to say nothing about the analysis of the water, the warning might not carry much weight, but that was another thing. He must give Kirstine a message for her father, and then he would tell old Jim. The old fellow might be savage, but his displeasure must be borne. Well, that was fixed, and now he saw his line, he must think about getting home.

Four or five days afterwards, Jim again went down the dale, and when he had waited for some time at the tea-shop, Kirstine arrived. He told her apologetically that he had weighed her plan, but when he thought himself broke his uncle had sent for him and he felt he must stop.

"You are resolved?" she remarked.

"Yes," said Jim, "I'm sorry. I'd have liked the job; but so long as I'm useful at Goldsike I ought not to go."

"Then, it's done with. One cannot persuade a Railton. Let's talk about something else."

"Very well," said Jim. "I want you to warn Mr. Firth not to buy White Scar. The estate is not as valuable as he perhaps thinks; the soil is wet and stony, and all the power he could get from the beck would not drive a modern mill."

Kirstine laughed. "Yet old Jim might buy? I suppose he does not want us at White Scar."

"That is so. Then White Scar, so to speak, would round up Goldsike, and so forth. If Mr. Firth wants the land, he must meet our competition at the sale, and I'd think him rash—I hope you'll believe my object's good and I'm not just playing for my side."

"Your fastidiousness must be rather a burden, Jim. Sometimes, of course, one plays for oneself. But have you some grounds to think we mean to use the mill?"

"Not very long since I saw Mr. Firth take some measurements, and when he knew I'd spotted his tape

and note-book he couldn't altogether hide his annoyance."

Kirstine reflected. She did not know her father's plans, and she imagined Jim did not. His embarrassment was rather obvious and she knew his honesty. In fact, she might acknowledge his object was good. All the same, if he got Goldsike, he took her brother's inheritance, for she believed old Jim had cheated her mother. The Firths were justified in the hate they bore the Railtons.

"I will carry your message, and if it's some comfort, I do not suppose all you wanted was to daunt a competitor," she said, and gave him a mocking glance when she resumed: "We are an obstinate lot, and until one is broken, I expect our houses will carry on the fight. Since that is so, your falling in love with me might have supplied the sort of romantic complication play-wrights like to use. You, however, are not remarkably romantic, and so long as you are satisfied to be my pal, I am, I hope, resigned. At all events, we are not forced to fight."

Jim's face got red. He was not Kirstine's lover, but sometimes she moved him disturbingly. Kirstine laughed.

"So far, you agree? Well, I wonder whether you are going to the Farmers' Hunt ball. I really think you ought, and if you are there I might reserve a dance."

Jim said he would go, and soon afterwards Kirstine went off. When he got back to Goldsike he told Railton about the message he had sent Firth. His look was rather firm than apologetic, and although he had reckoned on something like an explosion, the old fellow smiled.

"Well, well, you are an honest lad! But you said nothing about the analysis?"

"I did not. I rather thought you'd get mad——"

"Not at all," said Railton dryly. "Firth is a cunning, unscrupulous fool. Only a crooked fool would refuse to see that sometimes another's motive might be honester than his. He will not imagine I sent him the message; he'll argue it's the sort of bluff an unsophisticated youth might try, but it implies that we would like White Scar. He'll speculate about my keenness and wonder whether I think I could use the mill. Anyhow, he must strain every nerve to beat us. You see where you have led him?"

Jim frowned. His meddling certainly had not helped; but his uncle resumed:

"He has got a generous warning, on which he will refuse to act. Since you are my superintendent, you must not send him another. Do you promise?"

"I suppose I must," said Jim.

In the morning he met Hodson on the moor and inquired about the Hunt ball. Hodson laughed.

"You mustn't picture the sort of function that is held in the grass counties. The moorfolk follow hounds on foot, as a rule a long way behind, and sometimes the huntsman does not gather up his pack for two or three days. Some go out with guns, and one lot's bag was twenty-five foxes in about three weeks. However, in the low country, farmers, shopkeepers, and a few country house people ride to hounds, and where walls and fences are mended by wire they get some thrills. The ball is a jolly affair, and if you are going, I can get you a ticket."

Jim thanked him, but did not state that Kirstine had asked him to go. His recent frankness had not been useful, and he began to think reserve had some advantages.

XXV

JIM GOES TO THE BALL

THE Farmers' Hunt ball began unfashionably soon. The members' homes were scattered about the lonely dales and rolling plain, but few had cars, and the roads were dark and steep. At eight o'clock the town hall floor was crowded, and Jim waited under the gallery where the musicians played for his dance with Kirstine.

Although the music was not first class, it was better than the music to which he had danced in the North-West, and the shrill violins, the rhythmic beat of feet, and the swiftly changing colour pattern the women's clothes wove moved him to a pleasant thrill. Jim was young, and for the most part, at lonely Goldsike all one thought about was sheep.

Gentlemen in evening clothes were rather conspicuous than numerous, and some dancers' boots were not light. One soon spotted the country house people, but Jim admitted they were good mixers, and he did not think their object was to patronize the farmers' ball. For that matter, the moorsfolk and dalesfolk were not the sort to welcome patronage.

The men were large and the women tall. Yellow hair and blue eyes marked the Anglo-Danish type; but some with darker hair and thin faces sprang from older British stock. They were proud folk and did not pretend to a cultivation that was not theirs. One could not imagine them pushful, but to push them might be rash. They were not boisterous; in

the dark hills one goes soberly, and somehow their calm was dignified.

For the most part, however, Jim's glance followed Kirstine. Her shimmering green dress and white skin seemed to seize the light, and she carried herself with a queer, exotic grace. Jim felt she dominated the moving picture, but Kirstine's habit was to do something like that, and one did not notice with whom she danced. When the music stopped she crossed the floor.

"You waited for me?" she said. "I suppose I ought to be flattered, particularly since Wat presented you to one or two attractive girls. Well, I'm frankly human and willing to be admired. You are allowed to state how you like my clothes."

"I am not a milliner, but in a way, they're not important," Jim replied. "You yourself are rather dazzling, and when you take the floor one does not see the other girls. But if you are going to be my partner, I expect I ought to apologize for my clothes."

"Not at all," said Kirstine. "An independent fellsider dresses as he likes. Besides, you are a Goldsike Railton, and clothes are not your badge." She stopped for a moment, and her glance rested with scornful humour on a country house group. "Some are Cumbrians by purchase," she resumed. "They bought the freedom of the county with a useful sum, but their true home is Birmingham, or perhaps Liverpool. The old-stannard statesmen are our real aristocrats. However, the music begins, and you asked me for a dance."

They swung into the circling crowd. Jim had danced in Canada and he knew the syncopated tune. He was a horseman and an axeman, and in Cumberland he followed his sheep across the sliding scree. His step was light and his balance was like a mountaineer's. In a few moments Kirstine knew his qualities and

resolved to use the best she had got. As a rule, Kirstine's best was very good. Sensuous music and rhythmic movement began to work on Jim. For some time he had fought Kirstine's domination. He did not think she wanted him for a lover; she rather refused to allow him to rebel, and that perhaps was all. Yet if the dance went on much longer, he felt she might win.

The negroid music stopped, and a card, hung over the front of the gallery, stated that the next number was an extra by request. Kirstine's hand was yet on Jim's arm, her pose was slack and her breath languid, as if her abandonment to the dance had been an emotional strain. The groups about them waited.

"An extra? If you like, it's ours," she said.

The violins began a prelude of clanging chords, and linked notes on the high strings. Here and there people clapped approving hands, but it looked as if the young were puzzled. The music went with a four-time swing and a sort of bite, like steel on a sharpening stone. It moved one's feet and braced one, as if a wind from the moors blew through the hot room.

"By George," said Jim, "that's something fresh! Yet I think I've heard it in the North-West."

"The music is English music; Gothic music, Jim. At one time, I expect it was Norwegian. A Cumberland reel, or perhaps a Scottish country dance. When we want something purely English, we borrow from the Scots."

They waited. Two or three groups took the floor. Others advanced hesitatingly, and Kirstine laughed.

"If the dance was a Louisiana dance, all might join, but it looks as if we did not know our own. Well, I think the old comes back. Only dead things are done with, and fellside traditions, like fellside folk, are remarkably hard to kill."

The groups began to move and the crowd pushed back. The dance was a square dance and the opening figure was intricate. Jim heard Kirstine's shoe tap the polished boards.

"Wat has found a partner; he's joining them," she said. "If you know the old-fashioned Lancers, I might steer you through."

"I am sorry I do not," said Jim. "All the same I have, in Ontario, seen dances like this. The tunes had queer names, *Monymusk*, *Patthernella*—— But come on. Let's try it!"

They and some others joined the second figure. For a few bars Jim concentrated on the puzzling steps and allowed Kirstine to indicate where he ought to go. Then, and he did not know if memory revived, or the clanging, ranting music carried him along, but his hesitation vanished, and he gave himself to the dance. He had got a noble partner, and if he were awkward, he knew she would see him out.

At the change of the figures people clapped hands as if they applauded dancers on the stage, and when Hodson's fashionable partner strayed and joined the next group the audience laughed. Hodson smilingly retrieved her, but the girl's eyes sparkled and she fixed them on her shoes.

When the music stopped Jim was sorry. He steered Kirstine to a bench by the wall and Hodson crossed the floor. In the gallery above their heads the musicians tuned their relaxed strings.

"The next is mine, but perhaps you'd sooner rest," said Wat.

"You do not use much tact," Kirstine rejoined. "If you are fatigued, we will allow you to stop and talk."

"Oh, well, I am not exhausted. The dance was a jolly dance and we must ask for another. It looked as if we satisfied our audience."

"Yours was the star turn. I doubt if Miss Mapleson altogether saw the joke ; but if you dance with a girl from Birmingham, a Scottish-Cumbrian dance, you risk getting lost."

"You and Jim led the last figure, and I imagine the dances he best knows came from Alabama."

"To some extent, I'm Cumbrian," Jim remarked. "Then, you see, the Hudson Bay's Scots factors ruled the North-West. However, it's not important and the dance *was* a jolly dance. The music made you go. I reckon jazz would never put a move on you like that."

Hodson laughed. "The music is native music. We are not a subtly intellectual lot. Our proper line is action ; the uphill push and the front attack. We like a clear call, and *John Peel* is our anthem. Built up on an older tune, it's a call we understand. His horn and hallo, the ballad states, would waken the dead."

"Yes," said Kirstine, "sometimes I think we are Gothic ; at all events, the fellsiders are. But I don't know if we ought to get romantic about three or four fiddles, one of which screams horribly on the upper shifts. Besides, ought you not to look up your next partner ?"

Hodson agreed, and when he went off Kirstine turned to Jim.

"Wat is not subtle, but he is not a fool. I think steadfast is the proper word for him. As a rule, steadfast people are sober. There's the trouble, and sometimes you yourself are slow. I suppose you really are resolved to stay with old Jim ? My friends have not yet found the proper man."

Jim stated apologetically that his refusal stood. Kirstine smiled.

"You feel you mustn't take a bribe from the enemy ? Well, your uncle is certainly not my friend,

but one mustn't exaggerate, and if I were willing, I do not see where I could hurt the old fellow. However, since you are scrupulous, I mustn't tempt you another time. To-night I want you to be nice. In fact, I want you to help me in something like an adventure."

"Now we can agree. Where my help is useful, I'm your servant, ma'm," said Jim.

"Very well," said Kirstine. "At ten o'clock you will wait by the end pillar under the gallery, and you mustn't engage for any dances after that. But the music has stopped and my partner looks about for me."

She went off and by and by, when the room got hot, Jim went to the hall door. Two short flights of steps led to a platform at the porch where stone pillars supported a flat roof. Jim's clothes were not thin, the cold was bracing, and leaning on the rails, he looked about.

Swift, torn clouds rolled across the moon, and when they passed the wet stones reflected the pale light. A flood splashed along the channel at the pavement's edge, and on the other side hail and sleet sparkled in the doorsteps' corners. A savage north-west wind swept the valley, and for a moment Jim thought he heard the flooded river. Then the noise was drowned by the gale, and a foot passenger, his hand on his hat and a wet mackintosh flapping about his legs, staggered across the street. The cold was biting and the rain had obviously not stopped for long, but Jim had engaged a room at the *Hollybush* and meant to wait for morning.

For a moment or two he mused about Kirstine. When he was on the hills he could forget her, and when she was in London he had not thought about her for two or three months. He refused to be dominated by a girl he somehow did not trust. All the same, when she was about his resolve melted.

His brain counselled firmness, but it looked as if his flesh was weak. Then he thought she sensed his rebellion and was resolved to conquer.

To see her object baffled him. Even when she was kind, he felt a queer antagonism, as if she hated him because she hated his house. Yet she was kind; she had schemed to get him a post she thought he would like. Anyhow, when he danced with her he was frankly carried away, and he did not think the music had much to do with it. For a few glorious minutes he had held Kirstine in his arms——

Jim frowned. To be moved like that was ridiculous; in a way, it was humiliating, but if she gave him another dance, he would again know the thrill. However, Hodson had presented him to one or two jolly girls, and until ten o'clock Kirstine would be occupied. Then he had engaged to wait for her.

A fresh shower beat the stones, the wind swept the porch, and Jim went back to the hall. He found partners for two or three dances, and at ten o'clock Kirstine joined him under the gallery.

"Do you know what sort of a night it is?" she asked.

"It was pretty fierce when I was at the porch. Savage wind and showers of rain and hail."

"My luck's not good, but in Cumberland one is *used with* rain and we will carry on. Very well. I am going to steal away, and if Wat inquires where I am, you will not state that I have gone. In half an hour you will be at the porch, and as soon as my car stops you will jump on board."

"Quite," said Jim. "Might I inquire where we are going?"

"Is it important?" said Kirstine, with a baffling smile. "When we take the highroad all England is in front; but since I mustn't alarm you, I expect

we'll stop at Hayesghyll, where there is an inn and I can get a train."

Hayesghyll was twenty miles off, and one must cross high moorland, by steep open roads. The spot was not on the railway that went through the market town, and Jim thought he saw the reason for Kirstine's driving there.

"You are going to Durham or Yorkshire, and cannot get a train from our station?"

"Sometimes you are keen, Jim. The train I might get to-morrow arrives after my friend's wedding."

"Then, why did you wait for the ball?"

Kirstine told him. At a small town, a banker, lawyer and doctor must support the public functions, and Firth was an officer of the Hunt. Since business called him to London, she must be his representative. When she was asked to her friend's wedding, another day was fixed, but the bridegroom was a navy officer, and the Admiralty had ordered his ship to a foreign station. In consequence, the date was altered, and when Kirstine got the telegram she hesitated. To reach the small Yorkshire town was awkward, and she must wait for an hour or two at a desolate junction. All the same, she meant to start.

"For a stormy night, it's something of an adventure and I like your pluck. But do you think Mr. Firth would approve?"

"I do not. He, however, is three hundred miles off."

"There's another thing," said Jim. "I have met Mr. Firth, but all he knows about me is, I'm the nephew of a man he does not like. Now Hodson is his neighbour at Staneghyll, you are old friends, and so forth. Since you need a confederate, he is perhaps the proper man."

"The drawback is, Wat is not keen about the post. When I indicated that he might help, he declared

the excursion was absurd, and I believe he's satisfied he persuaded me to let it go. If you hesitate, I mustn't urge you; but in half an hour I start."

"Very well. When you call for me, I'll be waiting."

"You're a sport," said Kirstine. "As soon as the music stops I'll steal away, and nobody must know I'm gone."

Forty minutes afterwards, a little two-seated car rolled up to the town hall steps and Jim got on board.

XXVI

KIRSTINE TAKES THE HIGH ROAD

IN the valley, woods and hedges cut the wind, and the car rolled smoothly ahead. Water splashed in the wings, the engine beat a soothing rhythm, and the wet road shone like silver in the lamps' swift beam. Now and then a biting draught pierced the joints of the hood, but the little car was not cold, and Jim again was conscious of the disturbing thrill he knew when he was near Kirstine. Sometimes she swayed against him, and his impulse was to put his arm round her. The queer thing was he imagined she would not rebuke him, but he refused to experiment.

"I hope you are not cramped in the corner," she said by and by. "We are not large people, and all I need is room for my arm at the wheel."

"We are going pretty fast. If you got a jolt, you might put us in the ditch. The journey's awkward. I suppose you have properly checked up your schedule?"

"Oh, yes," said Kirstine. "The stars and daggers in the time-table are rather confusing, but I hope all is right. We should be at Hayesghyll twenty minutes before the train, and might get some coffee at the station. I had thought we might push on ten or fifteen miles to Thorpe Mawbray, where the train waits for another, and I could choose my compartment, but we mustn't risk it——"

The road curved and a bright beam searched the trees. Kirstine pulled across, and for a moment Jim's

eyes were dazzled. Then water splashed the car and he saw crowded figures behind shining glass.

"A motor express for Scotland," Kirstine remarked. "Don't you feel you would like to chase them to Glasgow in the dark? When I take the road I hate to run on schedule. That's accurate, isn't it?"

"It carries the meaning. You'd sooner feel all you had got to do was to start her off and go as fast as, and where, you like?"

"You really are keen, Jim. Where we plunge into the hills a road goes south-west to Lancaster and another south-east to Leeds. If you had not obstinately refused the post, we might carry on for my friends' model farm. If you but saw the farm, I expect you would want to stop, and if my pals saw you—The conclusion's obvious, but I respect your modesty. By daybreak we'd be at Derby. We'd lunch at a black-and-white timbered hall in Leicestershire."

Jim frowned. Sometimes one did not know if Kirstine joked, and one sensed in her a queer reckless vein. He was young and he admitted rash adventure called. All the same, he was not going to Leicester, and she knew he meant to stay with his proper job.

"We started for Yorkshire and your friends expect you at the wedding," he remarked.

"Oh, well, to pretend you would have liked the plan would not cost you much, but I suppose you refuse to exaggerate," Kirstine rejoined. "However, we mustn't talk. It looks as if the river was on the road——"

She slowed the engine, and for a hundred yards the car forged through a shining flood. Soon after they reached the other side, a guide-post marked a crossing. Kirstine turned the wheel.

"Two roads go to Leicester, but ours is the third. Since you are not recklessly romantic, we must go where duty and friendship lead, although it implies

my waiting for part of the night at a cold and lonely station. Then at five o'clock in the morning, I get down at another four miles from my friends' house. I hope they will send for me, but you cannot register a telegram, and I have known people who durst not deal firmly with a pampered chauffeur."

Jim said nothing. He did not like to picture Kirstine at the bleak waiting-room, and in some circumstances he might have gone with her. One obstacle was, when he got back to Goldsike he must account for his absence and old Jim had frankly declared his opinion of Kirstine. Jim imagined she saw some other obstacles, although she was perhaps not unwilling for him and his uncle to dispute.

The road went uphill and their speed dropped on the long inclines. Trees and hedgerows vanished, and stone walls with uneven tops rolled slowly back. Heavy rain beat the glass, the scream of the wind got louder, and when the shower was blown away melting snow sparkled on the stones. Jim, looking up from the window in the door, thought the moors got white; Kirstine concentrated on her driving, and when the savage gusts swept down the hills it looked as if she were bothered to keep the road's crown. A hare leaped across the lamps' beam, and something crashed against the hood. A dazzled curlew Jim thought, or perhaps a wild duck hurled along by the gale. That, however, was all. Only they and the wild creatures of the moor fronted the storm.

Jim felt the engine laboured. They were not going fast, and the road yet curved into the lonely hills. The stones were getting white and the car was cold.

"Do you know where we are?" he inquired.

"I do not," said Kirstine. "If I try to calculate, we might hit the wall. And I'd sooner you didn't talk."

Jim was willing to be quiet. He had steered hard-

mouthed horses, and he thought the wind, for the most part, blew across the road and she mechanically tried to bear against its sideways thrust. Anyhow, when a gust had gone, the car for a moment seemed to skid to windward. Then sometimes melting snow blurred the glass. Jim began to think the excursion foolhardy.

At length, a white hill cut the wind, and by contrast, the night was almost calm. Water splashed in the dark and the engine's throb got fast. It looked as if the valley were level and Kirstine pushed the car along.

"We are three or four miles from Hayesghyll," she said.

She turned her head. Across the valley bright reflections touched a plume of steam. Then a row of twinkling lights drew level with the car and vanished.

"Your train! Plunged into a tunnel, I suppose," said Jim. "But what are we going to do?"

"Push on and find out," Kirstine replied. "If the train is my train, two or three clocks are wrong."

The car leaped ahead, and soon Jim saw shining windows and high, coloured lights. When he helped Kirstine down, a bitter wind swept the station yard, and a tarpaulin on a goods truck snapped like a flag. Jim shivered, and seizing Kirstine's arm, pushed her through the arch. When they were behind the offices the blood leaped to his skin, and to feel he could properly get his breath was some relief. But for the wind in the roof and the snapping truck-sheet all was quiet; two or three lamps flickered and he thought nobody was about. After a few moments, however, he saw a man struggled with the sheet. When it was fast, the man climbed to the platform and Kirstine signed him imperiously.

"Aw right, ma'm," he said. "Fire'll likely be out

in waiting-room, but I've got two-a-three sticks. Train for Car'el isn't due for an hour."

"We are not going to Carlisle. Why did the express for Yorkshire start before the proper time?"

"She didn't," said the porter. "To-night she doesn't stop. Train that's gone is a market special. On Wednesdays she runs to Thorpe Mawbray in front of the express."

"But the time-table states the express stops," said Kirstine angrily.

"Ivery night but Wednesday and Saturday, miss. If you had leeked, you might have seen t' star, and note at bottom S.W.E. T'other train has a dagger that stands for W.O."

"D—— the time-table!" said Kirstine. "Only railway men and cross-word puzzle writers understand that bag of tricks. However, I suppose the express does stop at Thorpe?"

The porter agreed, and Kirstine, glancing at the station clock, ordered him to wait, and signed Jim to follow her along the platform.

"I expect you think we ought to go back?"

"That is so," said Jim. "I begin to think we ought not to have started."

Kirstine shrugged scornfully. "I will not persuade you. We might, of course, stop at the inn here and, starting at daybreak, reach my friends' house before the wedding; but I dare say you would sooner not. I might get the express at Thorpe, where you would wait for a train the other way."

Jim knitted his brows. If the express was gone when they arrived, they must stop at Thorpe. They could not push on across the snowy Pennine range, and he began to doubt if they could get home. So far as he could see, Kirstine was rather annoyed than disturbed, and she called the porter.

"How far off is Thorpe?"

"Fowteen miles, if you go by Scales ; ten miles if you take the high road over fell. Banks is steep in some places, but road's not very bad. You turn left at market cross, and I wouldn't say but you'll get there in time for express."

Jim rewarded the fellow and pushed Kirstine on board. Since they were going, they must go soon, and to hold the door against the wind was hard. Wet snow blurred the glass and Kirstine said the wiper did not work. Jim noted that her coat was woolly cloth. She had a heavy, leather motor coat, but she had perhaps forgotten it at the garage. In fact, it looked as if her staff-work was not good, and he thought it strange. As a rule, all Kirstine did was competently done. Then he somehow imagined she noted his annoyance and was ironically amused. He ought, perhaps, to have forced her to turn back, but after all the car was hers.

The cold and storm did not account for the vague disturbance that bothered him. In Canada he had fronted much worse storms. If he must be frank, he would sooner Kirstine was not his companion in the night's adventure. He mustn't admit he was afraid of her ; he was perhaps afraid of himself, because he knew she could, if she wanted, carry him away. There was the trouble, although it looked as if he argued like a boorish prig.

The houses rolled back, and the lights flickered on a broken pillar. They turned left and when they climbed a long hill snowflakes blew across the flickering beam. Bitter draughts pierced the hood and the cold got keen. At the top of the hill, a roaring blast struck the car. The hood cracked and strained, and the glass was covered by thick, wet flakes. On the windward side, the road had been cut through outcrop limestone and Kirstine steered for the shelter of the rock and stopped.

"Be a sport, Jim!" she said. "In a minute or two the squall will blow away, and I expect you have been as cold before."

"In the North-West, I camped every night for a week behind a snow bank, and at daybreak pushed off with a loaded hand-sled," Jim agreed. "All I had then to do was to think for myself, and my partner was an old-time plainsman."

"I dare say an obstinate girl, whom you cannot control or advise, is an embarrassment. For all that, if we are blown into a ditch, I hope you will not revengefully allow me to freeze."

"The snow gets thinner and time is going," Jim remarked. "If we do not make the station in front of the express, it will be awkward."

"If we were forced, we might push on for Yorkshire."

"Over the snow on the high fells? I think not," said Jim in a resolute voice. "I am not a motor mechanic, but I reckon I could let down a tyre or smash a sparking-plug."

Kirstine laughed. "You would sooner stop at Thorpe? There is a hotel, of a sort, and we might wake up the landlord. Your uncle, however, is not remarkably up to date, and there is no use in pretending he thinks well of me. It looks as if you might be horribly compromised, which is, I believe, the word old-fashioned people use. However, we might risk starting."

The car rolled ahead, and when they fronted the gale on the open road and Kirstine concentrated on her steering, Jim admitted some relief. Her frank talk embarrassed him; he thought she knew it did so, and was willing to indulge her malicious humour. In fact, he hoped that was all, because she might be experimenting in order to find out for how long he could resist. Yet, if his resistance broke, he reckoned he

would get the scornful rebuke he certainly would deserve. Well, he had undertaken to see Kirstine out, and as far as possible, he must make good; but for her next adventure she must get a fresh confederate.

The clouds rolled away and moonlight sped across the desolate moor. The long slopes were chequered black and white, for bent-grass and heather pushed through the thin snow. For the most part, the gale had swept the road, but in the hollows melting slush leaped about the wheels. There were no walls; the road was open, and when a gust swooped across the waste the hood bulged and strained against the creaking frames. The inclines were steep, and although they made some progress Jim began to think the engine pulled slackly. Sometimes it seemed to miss its proper beat, and at length the stroke was obviously broken. Kirstine steered for the heath and stopped.

"It looks like exhaustion," she remarked, and gave Jim a small flash-lamp. "You might investigate. The tank is at the back, and two petrol cans are in the luggage box."

Jim got down on the lee side; the wind blew across the road and he durst not open the other door. His boots sank in boggy heath, and the biting cold cut his breath, but he removed the tank plug, and when he knew why the engine had stopped, pushed up the lid of the luggage box. Moving Kirstine's large port-manteau, he pulled out the petrol tins. When he threw them back he swore, and sheltering behind the hood, searched the desolate landscape.

Two miles off, a white, flat-topped hill, pierced by dark gullies, sloped to the moor. Its nearer end shone; the other melted in driving cloud, and he saw the dark bank would presently roll across the moon. In the meantime, the light was good, and not far off a cart-track went up the moor. A road implied a farm, and he rejoined Kirstine.

"So far as I can distinguish, the tank is empty," he said. "The two cans are in the box, but the gasoline has been used."

"And that's all? You know where to stop. Still, I expect to inform me is some satisfaction."

"Not at all," said Jim. "If I'd found some juice, I'd be much happier; but we must fix what we are going to do about it."

"To begin with, you might get on board and shut the door. We must wait for a passing motorist and beg some petrol."

"If a motorist is on the road, I reckon he'll go round by Scales. Then you'd freeze before morning."

"Get on board," said Kirstine. "I am not far from freezing now. We have a rug, and your coat and mine. If we pooled the articles, all would cover us."

Jim frowned. Kirstine discreetly suggested that they should pool the warmth of their bodies. He was not going to do so, and he saw another plan. It looked as if her carelessness had entangled both, but he began to think that when they started she was willing to risk something in order that he and his uncle might jar. Her scheme had worked better than she had thought.

"Day breaks about eight o'clock," he said. "In an hour or two, you'd be numbed by cold. Since we have got to move, we'll move now, when there is some warmth and force in us."

"Might I inquire where we are going?" said Kirstine, in a queer, hard voice.

"If we cannot find a house, we must try to make Thorpe Mawbray on our feet; but I reckon a lane I spotted goes to a farm. Brace up and come on."

Kirstine laughed, a scornful laugh.

"To be ordered is something fresh. Are you afraid to stop in the car with me?"

"Yes," said Jim. "For one thing, we might be snowed up, and the wind might wreck the hood. The

grounds I've mentioned are, perhaps, enough. I didn't plan the fool excursion, you made me accountable for you, and I've got to put you somewhere for the night. We must start before a fresh snowstorm breaks."

"Suppose I refuse? You are not on your native soil and you must not talk to me like a frontiersman."

"Just now I am trying to be polite; but there is not much use in talking. Fasten your coat, fix your hat, and let's push off."

Kirstine got down, and although she stepped back, Jim firmly seized her arm.

"You are a typical Railton. I begin to think I hate you," she remarked.

XXVII

HODSON TAKES OVER

KIRSTINE'S boots were the sort of boots fashionable young women use, and melting snow covered the stony road. In the cart-track, water filled the holes and channels horses' feet and wheels had ploughed. The icy slush soon soaked her stockings, but Jim firmly hurried her along. Storm clouds now covered the moon, and to distinguish between the road and the black ditch at one side was hard.

He thought Kirstine royally angry. She declared she hated him, and although he did not altogether see her grounds, he tried to be resigned. When they plunged into a hole he imagined her remarks were meant to hurt, but it was not important, and the wind drowned her breathless voice. Jim admitted he himself was not serene, and to see her safe under a friendly roof would be some relief.

In the meantime, he tried to steer her where the mud was shallowest. The storm-clouds covered half the sky and the wind got worse. Sometimes they were forced to stop for a savage gust, and to get their breath was hard. By and by Jim felt sharp stones under his boots and saw a shallow quarry in a knoll by the track. The broken bank cut the wind, snow-flakes tossed about them, and he pushed Kirstine into the shelter of the rock.

"Something like a blizzard is breaking. I reckon we'll wait," he gasped.

An Arctic blast roared across the moor, and for a few minutes all they saw was tossing snow. When the snow stopped, tremendous rain began. Water trickled down the rock, and for all the wind's turmoil one heard the slanted deluge beat the pools. Jim's coat got heavy and he felt the drainage from its skirt chill his knees; Kirstine's was not cut to fasten low, and it blew about her like a flag. They durst not press against the streaming rock, and the pool in which they stood got deeper fast. Jim felt Kirstine shiver, but it did not look as if the storm had broken her spirit.

"Now I hope you are satisfied!" she said. "How long do you propose to stop?"

"Ten minutes, I think. A storm of this sort soon blows over. I believe the clouds are breaking."

Kirstine turned her head, and the water from her hat struck cold on her face.

"For once, you are a trustful optimist," she rejoined. "The lane goes to some peat hags, and if we wandered about for miles, I do not believe we would find a house. When the rain does stop I am going back."

Jim said nothing. To dispute would not help, but Kirstine was going where he went, and when at length the rain did stop he seized her arm. He thought she resisted, but the wind buffeted them, and he did not know. He pushed her into the lane, and in a few minutes a fresh deluge swept the moor.

Bending their heads to meet the blast, they laboriously followed the track, and by and by a faint glow pierced the rain. Jim thought the dim reflection was from a rested fire, and pulling Kirstine behind a wall, he beat on a cottage door. For a time they waited; and then a brighter light sprang up and the door swung back.

"Whea's there?" somebody inquired.

Jim said they were drenched motorists, and shoved

Kirstine into the cottage. The wavering flame of a candle steadied when the door was shut, and he looked about. The floor was stone, and the cupboard with its sloping top propped up was obviously a bed. Crumbling peat blocks burned in the flat hearth, and it looked as if the old woman who studied him with dull curiosity had just got up from the cupboard bed. The clothes she had hurriedly pulled on did not altogether cover a flannel nightgown; thin, tangled, grey hair touched her wrinkled neck.

"What is it ye want?" she asked.

Jim broke the fire with his boot and threw on fresh peat. Kirstine said they needed shelter from the storm.

"Eh?" said the old woman. "Tho'll need to speak up, or I'll not can hear."

"Our car has stopped. We cannot get on to Thorpe. The night is a horrible night."

Rain beat the glass, the wind screamed in the chimney, and smoke and peat ash tossed about the room.

"'Tis that," the woman agreed. "Your motor's staw'd? I wouldn't say but thoo's wet."

Kirstine's coat was dark from saturation, water oozed from her soaked dress, and her boots marked a miry track across the flags. For all that, she carried herself with savage haughtiness and her eyes sparkled.

"The old thing is half-witted," she remarked and went on in a louder voice: "I am rather wet. We cannot face the storm and must stop for the night. Do you understand?"

"Aw yiss. T' night is terrible wild, and t' motor's staw'd. Well, well, thoo can tak' my son's room. He's at Ravensworth and 'll not be back till Sunday. A canny, sober lad, and t' best field drainer on moor-side. But I'll tak candle and sort up room for you and your man."

"You will not," said Kirstine imperiously. "He is

not my man." She fronted Jim and laughed, a scornful laugh. "It is altogether unthinkable!"

"He is nut your man? Then wheer's thoo and him going at this hour o' night?"

"It is not at all important, but I was going to a wedding in Yorkshire."

"A wedding? If thoo and him's for Gretna, you're twenty miles off t' road."

Swift colour touched Kirstine's cheek, and her mouth went tight. Jim turned his head and looked the other way. To some extent, the situation was humorous, but Kirstine obviously did not see the joke, and her anger puzzled him. He had not thought her prudish and she boasted that she had not much use for old-fashioned rules. All the same, she was angry, and to make him accountable was not just.

"To sit by your fire until daybreak is all I want," he said to their host. "You can perhaps give the lady some dry clothes."

"I will not wear the old hag's clothes," Kirstine declared.

"Then, I must go for yours," said Jim. "I think the rain is stopping, and you may be able to fix things while I am away."

He went off. The rain had stopped, and on the whole he would sooner brave the storm than try to sooth Kirstine. He, however, reflected that when they left the car they had followed the main road for three or four hundred yards before they reached the lane, and he steered obliquely across the heath. The night was now dark, the wind buffeted him, and when he joined the road he was farther downhill than he had reckoned, and before he reached the car two or three minutes went. He found the wind had torn the hood, but in the dark he could not push down the fluttering wreck, and he was satisfied to seize the portmanteau.

His load embarrassed him, and the torn hood had

perhaps occupied him longer than he had thought, for when he got back to the cottage Kirstine was not about and Hodson looked up from a chair by the fireplace. Jim put down the portmanteau. He had certainly not thought to see Wat, but his keenest emotion was relief.

"Hello, Jim! It looks as if my help might be useful," the other remarked.

"That certainly is so," Jim agreed. "But how did you find us? And where is Kirstine?"

"I imagine she is in bed, and your landlady is trying to light a fire. Two or three days since Kirstine sounded me about her Yorkshire excursion, and although I refused, I wondered whether she might not find another accomplice. When she vanished from the ball I knew she had done so, and after inquiring at Firth's house I started the old 'bus. I might state I did not want to meddle, and if she had got safely on the train at Hayesghyll, I'd have gone home. Her light, small-powered two-seater is not the sort of car to cross the Pennines in a savage storm, and after interviewing the porter I pushed on for Thorpe. Your car, with the hood broken, was by the road, and I remarked the lonning——"

"Yes," said Jim, "when you were in the lonning I was on the heath. Well, I'd got horribly bothered, and I'm frankly glad for you to take over."

Hodson nodded, but his twinkle implied sympathetic understanding. Jim reflected that Wat was a first-class sort. Although people thought him Kirstine's lover, he was not shabbily jealous; he no doubt knew her, but it looked as if he was stanch. Hodson tapped on the bedroom door.

"Your luggage has arrived, m'lady. Now Jim has brought you some clothes, you might think about getting up."

The old woman took in the portmanteau, and Kirstine replied:

"Jim is not remarkable for his intelligence. He perhaps imagines one goes to a wedding in one's winter motor kit."

The door was shut. Hodson shrugged and pulled out some cigarettes.

"It looks as if you are out of favour, my lad. I dare say a little extra smoke will not bother our landlady."

Jim took a cigarette, and fetching a chair, gave Hodson a steady look.

"At all events, I don't know my offence."

"Yes," said Hodson, "sometimes it's puzzling. The proper line is to be philosophical."

They stretched their legs to the fire and Jim's wet clothes steamed. By and by the old woman joined them.

"You'll likely be her brother," she said to Hodson.

"I am not, ma'm. If I were her brother, I'd help her get up."

"Well, well, it's a queer carry on! She threwt her clothes about and noo they'll not gan in bag. Then she must have hot coffee, and I've got nowt but tea."

"Please brew the tea," said Hodson. "Sometimes one is lucky to get a second choice."

The tea was brewed and after some time Kirstine arrived. Jim admitted her clothes were not suitable for a cold motor drive, but he noted that she did not thank him for the effort he had used. When she had drained her teacup she gave Hodson a strap from the portmanteau and ordered him to fasten the dripping bundle on the floor.

"Since I cannot now push on for Yorkshire, I suppose we must go home," she said. "If Jim thinks about it, he will perhaps see his refusing to stop on board the car turned me back. I expect he had begun to feel he had had enough."

"You imagine I might have carried on?" said Hodson. "One likes to indulge you, but sometimes I know where I must be firm."

"Oh, well, let's get off. Whoever carries the bundle must be careful."

Jim rewarded their host and took the portmanteau. The bundle was not properly made, and if some articles were lost in transport, he would sooner Hodson were accountable. Hodson's car was at the end of the lonning and they got on board, but he stopped for a moment or two by Kirstine's. Part of the hood was over the side, and torn rags thrashed about a broken frame.

"We might cut away the wreck, but with only the screen for shelter, I doubt if I could drive home. I dare say we can waken somebody at the Hayesghyll garage and arrange for him to retrieve your car at daybreak. One can reach Hayesghyll by motor 'bus, and I could put her in your garage after dark. Or, if you like, you might meet me at dusk, a mile outside the town."

Kirstine laughed. "You have some talents Jim has not. On the whole, I would sooner not advertise our exploit, and I do not think he is anxious for notoriety."

Hodson started the car, and after stopping for ten or twelve minutes at Hayesghyll, they plunged into a fresh storm of sleet and rain. He drove fast, and although he had brought some rugs, Jim, shivering in his wet clothes, thought the cold justified the risks they ran. Hodson, however, had another object for his speed, and when they reached the town he took the road by the hall, which was not the shortest line to Firth's house.

Lights burned behind the windows, four or five cars were at the steps, and music implied that some ardent spirits yet carried on the dance. Two or three minutes

afterwards, Hodson stopped at Firth's house, blew his horn, and helped Kirstine down.

"It looks as if you were rather late at the ball," he said. "Still, functions of the sort are not numerous, and winter is long."

"Exactly," said Kirstine. "Thank you, Wat. The servants know I started for Yorkshire, but I think I can reckon on their being discreet."

The door opened, a light shone for a moment, and she vanished in the hall. Hodson started the car and steered for the *Hollybush*.

"Something like Dick Turpin's alibi," he remarked. "My lady hates to be baffled, and since she could not get to the wedding, to persuade herself the blame was yours was perhaps soothing. Anyhow, you are not forced to state when you left the ball."

Jim went to the room he had engaged, and in the morning had the pony harnessed and took the road up the dale. He did not talk about his adventure; he refused to think about it, but if Kirstine undertook another, he was firmly resolved he would not be her confederate.

Soon after the ball he and Mike stopped for a few minutes one evening in a field that touched the White Scar boundary. The ground sloped to the Goldsike beck, and a long, narrow fir wood cut the winds from the hills. Mike studied the grass. Under the dead, white tufts a few green shoots sprang.

"I would not say the soil was dry, but it's less wet than the fields beyant, and the herb is good. If the bullocks was induthrious, they might get a bite, and while the weather's open I would let them bide. We'd but need to scather a lock av hay morning and evening."

Jim smiled. In Canada, Mike's talk was Irish-Canadian; now he used Cumbrian words. *Lock* was perhaps Old English and stood for a small quantity.

"If you don't mind an extra job, you can fix it as you like. For some time you have wanted to turn out the bullocks. I suppose you really want their stalls for the youngsters?"

"The calves' hole is dark, and them getting big and crowding. All young things are the better for light and air. But if it would hurt the bullocks, ye do not think I would put them out?"

"I do not," said Jim. "I thought Richards a good cowman. His byre was a model byre, and I've known him use for bedding stuff I'd meant to use for feed; but the milkers and young stock have done better since you took control."

Mike leaned against a gate and lighted his pipe.

"The fella was indushtrious, but indushtry is not enough. All that cattle and children need is not their meat and drink, and here and there a wan has a way with the creatures. They're queer. They know when yes mean them well, and they know a man with cruelty in him when ye might not. An' a bad woman in the dairy will spoil the butter."

"Oh, shucks!" said Jim. "Do you believe the superstition? A large quantity of butter is made, and sold, in the low dales."

"An' some is notoriously bad; but so long as Mistress Hope is at Goldsike, yours will be first-grade. When I was at the grocery, the doctor's housekeeper came in. She wanted Goldsike butter, but she would take Danish or Australian if the other was gone. Mat-
tinson said he had farm butter; and it a penny less; and he let her see the stuff on the slabs. I'm naming no names, but ye would know the brands. 'Then,' says she, 'ye can keep it; I'll take Australian, if I pay ye twopence more!'"

Jim pulled out his pipe. The evening was not cold, and nothing useful could be done before dark fell.

"There's an argument for some politicians!" he remarked.

"I have done with them folk," said Mike. "Wance I was a patriot; in Canada where to be pathriotic did not cost me much. I went home and I found the new gang but the old lot, though they had another name. Yes can change the colour of the pôlis uniform, but I would not trust them Free State guards farther than I would the black R.I.C. But it's no great matter, and we talked about cattle. Yes can understand them if yes have the gift, but a gift is given, and ye must not boast. In Ireland, here and there a wan can stop running blood."

"I've known it done in Canada, with a tight bandage, Mike."

"Ye are a misbelieving Saxon. There's virtue in the right folk's word and touch. Yes had a slip of a girl at Goldsike—I mind her in the byre on Christmas eve, her hand on the Angus's neck while I dressed the beast's torn leg. Steady, but pitiful, and soothing in her voice——"

Jim nodded. He was not going to talk about Grace Atherton, but the picture the other drew was vividly distinct. In the meantime, his dog ranged the field, and when wings rattled in the gloom by a tall thorn hedge he turned his head. A long-tailed bird cut the sky and dropped into the wood.

"A pheasant! After the big shoots in the low country woods a few moved up the dale. Bill declares they sometimes stop, and he's known them rear a brood in spring."

"If they are let and can find their meat, they will stop," said Mike. "When yes drive a wood a pheasant will cheat the beaters where he can, and if he's not shot when they put him up, he'll go back for all the guns. The cover's his home; but he can be forced to emigrate like the rest av us."

"Until next fall, this lot will not be disturbed. The wood is ours."

"I wonder——" said Mike. "A pheasant is yours when it's on your land. Young Mr. Firth is a sportsman and the boys at Staneghyll are handy with a gun."

He opened the gate, and for two or three minutes they ploughed along the muddy lane behind the hedge. The light was nearly gone, and all was quiet but the beck. Then, in the wood across the field, wings rattled like castanets, and Mike stopped.

"Cushats! A wood-pigeon and a blackbird is the gamekeeper's friend. I would not say but some wan might be prowlin' about the dyke."

"Then, let's go see."

"The fella' would hear us shove through the brush," said Mike. "If ye would catch a poacher, ye must get there first. Then it's yet early and the birds watchful. I reckon he'd but be trying to spot where they roost, and in a quiet evening he durst not shoot. Ye wait for a windy night when the moon rides between the clouds; the birds not properly asleep but stupid. When ye are underneath, they cough and move along the branch. Your cartridge is loaded for the job; a taste av powder and maybe half an ounce av shot. At ten yards, and the pheasant perching, it is all ye want; and, with the wind in the trees, nobody would hear the gun."

"Looks as if ye were an expert," Jim remarked. "I suppose the proper man to catch a poacher is another poacher, and if the Staneghyll gang steal our pheasants, ye might help me try."

XXVIII

PUBLIC AUCTION

RAILTON waited by the courtyard arch. The morning was fine and behind the wall the sun was warm. In the yard Jim helped the horse-man harness the pony. By and by he heard a car stop and in a few moments Hodson joined Railton.

"I wondered whether you were going to the auction," he said. "My car is in the road and I'll undertake to bring you back."

"You perhaps *reckoned* on my going. Since White Scar would be a useful extension for Goldsike or Staneghyll, you would expect Firth and I to be the chief competitors. On whom do you put your money?"

"One must be discreet, sir, and I have not been asked to bet; but I imagine the fight will be stubborn. Shall I bring my car to the gate?"

"My pony will soon be harnessed. Old-fashioned folk are satisfied with old-fashioned tools, and I mustn't compromise you. You have friends in both camps, but from Firth's point of view your carrying the opposition to the field might not be a friendly act."

"A small politeness ought not to indicate that I have gone over to the enemy."

"You never know," said Railton. "I wouldn't risk it, Wat."

Hodson went off, and when the digby was ready Railton got on board.

"Wat's politeness might have cost him something," he remarked. "On the whole, I might have been

kinder had I allowed him to meet the bill, but where a woman is my antagonist I'd sooner not be shabby."

"Do you think Miss Firth will marry Wat?" Jim inquired.

"I think it the best chance she will get. Wat knows the jade, and since he's not daunted, she might play up. All the same, she springs from a bad stock. The risk, however, is Wat's and has nothing to do with us."

Jim let it go. He imagined the old fellow studied him, the road was steep and stony, and for the most part he concentrated on his driving. They lunched at the *Hollybush* and he remarked that all the tables were occupied. At one o'clock they and a number of others started for the auction rooms.

As a rule, the large, bleak hall was a warehouse for miscellaneous junk, but as far as possible the floor had been cleared. Bundles of young fruit trees were piled in a corner, and dusty furniture was pushed back against the wall. Jim remarked a worm-eaten oak chest, a cupboard that looked like Chippendale, and a battered rosewood piano, on top of which was a pike in a glass case and on the case a rusty bottom-lever gun.

Farmers and shepherds moved about in groups, their thick boots marking wet tracks on the boards, and three or four muddy cur-dogs prowled at their heels. Shopkeepers from the town joined them and a confused hum of talk echoed hollowly in the glass roof. At one end of the room, a few rows of chairs and benches crossed the floor, and when the auctioneer's clerk signalled Railton his advance was marked by friendly greetings and followed by interested glances. Jim thought the old fellow commanded the sort of interest a favourite actor might command were he spotted by a theatre queue.

The comparison was not extravagant. At a small

market town, a farm sale is an important function and sometimes a realistic drama. Everybody knows much about his neighbours' affairs, and where gossips met the quarrel between the Firths and Railtons was for long a favourite subject for conjecture and argument. Now Railton took the stage, Jim thought his audience sympathetic, but the dalesfolk do not display their emotions, and Firth, no doubt, had friends.

Besides the farmers, shopkeepers, and a few country house people, estate agents and brokers from other towns began to arrive, and when the auctioneer climbed to his desk on top of a table every seat was occupied and a standing crowd blocked the most part of the hall. Jim's glance searched the rows, but for some time he did not see Firth. The auctioneer was strongly built and fat. His face was red and his eyes twinkled. Balancing his mallet, he rapped the desk.

"At these sales, our rule is to begin with the most important item, and although I have been instructed to dispose of a large number of useful articles, varying from fruit trees to old artistic furniture, my first business is to invite your offers for the White Scar estate," he said. "Particulars have been supplied by poster and newspaper advertisement, but my clerk will give any gentleman who signals a small handbill. I might remark that the meadow, arable, and pasture land lies compactly in a ring fence. Practical farmers, whose fields are scattered, will recognize the advantage. When your hayfield is a mile off, and your corn across your neighbour's farm, to move the crop is expensive."

"It's aw that, and some is farther off," a man remarked feelingly.

"White Scar is free from the drawback. The house is large and commands noble views. Although there are no steadings but the stables, it might be renovated for a shooting lodge."

"*Rebuilt*, John," said a gentleman in front. "And where would you get your shooting?"

"On the moorland *heaf*, Mr. Forsyth. I believe there are yet some sportsmen who are satisfied to walk up grouse and partridges. To go out with a good dog and shoot two or three brace that you yourself find——"

"The dog finds the game, John, and when you use a new hammerless, you mustn't forget the safety-bolt."

Two or three laughed, as if they saw the joke, and Jim, looking round, saw Firth sit down at the end of the row.

"Time goes," said the auctioneer. "I hope the interlocutor will allow me to proceed. The White Scar mill was profitably run for, I think, forty years, and in Cumberland the rainfall does not get less. Where you can drive a turbine water power is cheap, and the mill might again be used for manufacturing."

"Thoo niver knows," a farmer at the back remarked ironically.

Firth looked up and smiled, a rather scornful smile, and Jim imagined he meant his amusement to be obvious.

"At all events," the auctioneer resumed, "the old mill, with some repairs, would be a noble barn. We admit the house is not a farmstead, but White Scar adjoins two or three large hill farms, on which, I think I may state, arable and meadow land is scarce. Their landlords, two of whom I am pleased to see, have perhaps weighed its advantages, and I would be happy to take their bids. Well, gentlemen, after some private negotiations, the trustees were not satisfied with the offers they received, and the proper value of an article is the price it commands in the open market. I am instructed to sell White Scar without reserve, and in order to start the competition, who will offer me two thousand pounds?"

Nobody did so, and he leaned against his desk and shook his head.

"Now, gentlemen! Caution is useful, and we are notoriously modest, but you mustn't exaggerate. Fifteen hundred pounds? One thousand pounds?"

A stranger in the first row nodded, and Firth gently turned his head.

"Eleven hundred?"

An estate agent signalled, and Railton touched Jim.

"The gentleman on our right is from Leeds and I think he wants the house. Maitland is his broker and they will push up the price."

"So far, Firth is not bidding," Jim remarked.

"He reserves his forces and I expect he waits for me."

A farmer signalled, and in two or three minutes the price was two thousand pounds. Here and there a man began to smoke, and Firth pulled out a cigarette he did not light. Then he whispered to his neighbour, who laughed.

"At twenty-five pounds an acre, the enclosed land, without the house and mill, would be cheap," remarked the auctioneer.

"Twenty-five pounds a yakker, John! For wet fellside land?"

"Drain tiles are not expensive, Tom, and White Scar is something like a fertile oasis in the moorland *heaf*. If you would sooner not risk your capital in live-stock, your neighbours will pay for pasture and buy all the stuff you can grow. I have known them buy baled foreign hay. For a sportsman who would sooner rent his fields than feed stock, or for a man who has not much money, White Scar is a model farm."

"Nobody on fellside has much money, but I could do with a bit of arable, and I'll bid another fifty pound," said a farmer next to Railton. "Not that I'll get it," he resumed.

"You never know," said Railton with a dry smile.

"Two thousand and fifty! Any advance?" said the auctioneer, and addressed somebody at the back of the hall. "Fifty more?"

"Staneghyll," a man near Jim said to his neighbour. "Since Joe is bidding, they've likely got a new manager at bank."

"I hadn't heard——" replied another and one or two laughed.

"The thing is strange," said Jim in a quiet voice. "Durst Stoddart bid against his landlord, sir?"

"His friends and Firth might doubt. People used to talk about a red herring; now we use aniseed——"

"Two thousand one hundred," said the auctioneer. "I cannot let the estate go for a sum like that. The days are short, the roads are bad, and I dare say a number of you want to be home by dark. Yes, Mr. Maitland? Fifty pounds more?"

The broker in the front row nodded, another signalled, two farmers at the back lifted their hands, and in five minutes the price was three thousand pounds, Jim did not think the change remarkable. He knew the dalesfolks' caution, but they were obstinate. Moreover, he imagined they knew the sum White Scar was worth, and so long as one competed against another they went soberly. To allow a stranger's agent to get a bargain was another thing. All the same, the last sum offered was near the estate's argicultural value, and for a moment or two the auctioneer waited.

"They know where to stop, John," Forsyth remarked.

"When you stop too soon you are sorry afterwards," the auctioneer rejoined. "Lambs are a good trade, gentlemen, and White Scar would help you winter a useful flock."

"He will not get an extra hundred pounds from a farmer," Railton said to Jim. "The broker is the

Leeds sportsman's agent. I do not yet see Firth's, but he will soon be forced into the ring."

"Three thousand. And fifty? Thank you, Mr. Maitland," said the auctioneer. "A hundred, Mr. Jefferson?"

"Firth's man," said Railton. It looks as if I must help them along."

"Three thousand one hundred and fifty. Fifty more, Mr. Maitland? Another gentleman! Thank you, sir. White Scar house is commodious, and at a small cost for renovation, particularly adapted for a sportsman's residence. The situation is attractive, and the beck would supply power for electric light. It is yet a cheap lot, Mr. Maitland. Thank you. Three thousand three hundred pounds."

"Four hundred," said Railton.

Heavy boots trampled the boards and the groups at the back pushed up behind the benches. The people who were willing to buy on economical grounds acknowledged themselves knocked out. If one must pay the price it had touched, White Scar could not profitably be farmed; and the audience speculated about the competitors. Maitland's sportsman client could perhaps afford to be extravagant, but they reckoned Jefferson bid for Firth, and all knew the lawyer was not rich. Moreover, he and old Jim Railton knew how much the estate was worth. Their competition was not economical, and the real drama had begun.

The price reached three thousand nine hundred pounds, and Maitland consulted with a gentleman across the floor. When the auctioneer asked for four thousand pounds the broker shook his head, and at four thousand one hundred another stopped.

"I must be home by dark," said Railton. "One hundred more!"

It looked as if Firth hesitated. His face was rather

red and his brows were knit, but he shrugged and openly signed Jefferson.

"Four thousand three hundred pounds. I wait for an advance," said the auctioneer.

"You might get it, sir. I think Firth is weakening," Jim said to Railton.

"I know my man," said Railton grimly. "He hopes another will meet the bill, but he durstn't stop."

He turned and gave the auctioneer a nod. Jim knew the old fellow pitiless, but he admitted a triumphant thrill. Sometimes one was forced to fight, and when he sent Firth a well-meant warning the fellow thought he cheated. Then, since his excursion with Kirstine, he had pondered, and his reflections were troublesome. The Railtons had borne much and sternly waited, but at length his uncle and Firth were engaged in an open fight.

"Four thousand five hundred pounds? If I can get five thousand, the trustees will be satisfied."

"And thoo'd deserve a gold watch," somebody remarked.

Two or three laughed, and others pushed forward in order to watch the antagonists. For a flockmaster, the sum was large, and exceeded by nearly two thousand pounds the agricultural value of the estate. All suspected Firth was rather extravagant than rich, and one or two had grounds to know he did not punctually meet his bills. Yet he smiled, a sort of reckless smile. Railton's look was inscrutable, but his mouth was tight. When the auctioneer glanced at him he signed, and in a minute or two the price was four thousand nine hundred and fifty pounds.

"Any advance? Fifty pounds, Mr. Railton?"

"Twenty-five," said Railton in a moody, hesitating voice.

For a moment all was very quiet and Jim saw the

broker glance at Firth. The fellow's smile was frankly triumphant. Goldsike was beaten.

"Five thousand, Mr. Jefferson?"

The broker agreed, and the auctioneer turned to Railton, who shook his head.

"Five thousand pounds! Any advance? Your last opportunity, gentlemen. Five thousand pounds for White Scar! Five thousand pounds——" His mallet struck the desk. "The estate is Mr. Jefferson's."

Thick boots scratched the boards. Jim heard murmuring voices, and the noise of chairs pushed back. People got up and some went off to examine the fruit trees. Others went quietly to the door. That was all, the sale was over.

When Railton was in the street he looked about. The sky was dark and a cold wind blew down the valley.

"Rain's not far off," he said. "We will start as soon as you can get the pony, Jim."

XXIX

THE DARK WOOD

FOR some time after the auction Jim was usefully occupied at the farm and on the hill. Since the night of the ball he had not met Kirstine, and Hodson imagined she visited with some friends, although he did not know where she was. Jim was satisfied to be left alone. He refused to dwell on their adventures in the storm, but he wondered whether Kirstine had not planned to carry him off to Leicester. If she had done so, it was rather to force him to quarrel with old Jim, than that he might get a post she thought he would like. In fact, he began to doubt if he would have got the post. Anyhow, it was done with, and Kirstine's power to bother him was gone.

At Candlemas, when the days begin to get lighter, Firth took possession of White Scar, and when Stoddart sent down some sheep and young cattle from Stane-ghyll, Richards used a room at the house. Jim imagined the queer, sullen fellow rather liked to be alone, but it had nothing to do with him, so long as Richards did not molest the pheasants in the neighbouring wood. Pheasant shooting was over and no fresh survivors would arrive, but Mike thought the birds already at the wood might stop, and in spring one or two might rear a brood.

Mike declared he mistrusted Richards and he would not put it by the fellow to slip across from White Scar on a likely night. Jim replied that since one must not shoot a pheasant after Candlemas there was not much

use in poaching. Mike said much depended on whom you tried to sell the birds, but if Richards were forced to eat them, to know they were Railton's would help him enjoy the stolen feast.

At dusk on a cold February evening Jim got back from the bank, and gave his uncle some news.

"Wreay, the seeds merchant, is dead. Watson, at the Stores, thought you might like to know."

"I am sorry to know," said Railton. "Old Bob was a good example of a vanishing type. Forty years since, he pushed a barrow at the warehouse for twenty shillings a week, and I believe he never durst write a business letter. For all that, Wreay's ley-grass seeds are famous, and when you bought his chemical manures you got the phosphate, or nitrate, the makers advertised. Old Bob refused to sell an article he did not know was good, and although one or two of his competitors might think it queer, I reckon his honesty paid. Do you know who inherits?"

"Watson thought a nephew, sir."

"Nat Ruthven, Hannah's son. The lad's keen. I wonder who are the trustees."

Mrs. Hope carried in some hot potato scones for Jim, and Railton looked up.

"Bob Wreay is dead, Martha."

"The old stannards are going, but two-a-three would be less missed. Firth would have his money."

Railton agreed, and when the housekeeper went off Jim inquired:

"Why should Firth have Wreay's money? There is a bank across the street."

"In towns like ours, a lawyer is his clients' stock-broker. Then, you see, the old school use old-fashioned rules. When a modern shopkeeper has a surplus, he rents a larger shop, and if he is very much up to date, buys an expensive car and perhaps speculates on a horse. The old stannard's habit was to build up a

reserve fund. He went to his lawyer and wrote a cheque. 'I've brought you five hundred pound, Tom; you'll put it in something safe,' he said."

"So long as he got the stock certificate, the plan was perhaps as good as another."

"Sometimes he did not. He took a receipt and gave the other Power of Attorney. We are suppositiously not a trustful lot, but after all we reckon the man we trust durst not cheat."

"If the fellow did cheat, he'd be done for," Jim agreed. "Yet he might risk his clients' money on a big *coup*, and if he lost, make a quick get-away."

Railton gave him a keen glance and for a moment or two it looked as if he cogitated. Then he said:

"Something like that has happened. For example, I met at an auction a friend from across the hills and inquired if his debtor had repaid a sum he lent on mortgage. He said his lawyer had had the money for three months, and I told him I thought the sum would be safer at the bank. He got his cheque, two weeks before his agent vanished. By and by he came across to see me. 'I'm sending you a young teeyup, Jim,' he said. 'His father was at Royal Show and you might have luck with him.'"

A tup is a ram, and when Railton indicated the cups on the sideboard Jim saw a light.

"My luck was rather good; in fact, it was better than my friend's, but after some time I bred from another strain."

Railton smiled, as if he savoured the joke, but when Jim began to study a newspaper, he lighted his pipe and knit his brows.

In the morning Jim saw Firth, and two others whom he did not know, in the fields by the mill. The strangers were obviously city men, a car waited at the gate, and when the group took the Staneghyll road Jim wondered whether their object was to examine

the beck's watershed. Since every gully in the moor discharged a peat-stained flood, Firth might hope to persuade his friends that they would get power for their turbines. That was something, and after all, Jim did not know if the water's chemical quality was important.

He had thought to find Mike feeding the bullocks. Fresh hay was scattered in the grass, but it looked as if Mike had gone, until, after a minute or two, somebody signalled from the wood. Jim went across and Mike came from behind a thick holly bush.

"When the beasts were fed I thought I would take a look round," he remarked.

"Quite," said Jim. "If you thought you could catch out Richards, I expect you'd stop all day. You're a revengeful gang."

"It's the name we get," Mike agreed. "I would not claim we're forgiving when our blood is hot, but for cold, calculating divilment wan sort of Englishman would beat the crookedest schemer Ireland ever bred. I'm thinking Richards is that sort. But if ye can spare five minutes, ye might be interested."

They crossed the narrow wood. At the other side, behind the wall along the bottom of the hill, Mike indicated the prints of nailed boots in boggy soil.

"He came by the moorfoot and ye will note where he climbed the wall. The fog on the stones is torn."

Jim nodded. "What about it? A fell shepherd takes the shortest line. I dare say Braithwaite's man was on the hill."

"He went by the low gate, and he has them Scotch tacketts in his boots," Mike rejoined. "These marks is nails. The proper spot to begin at is the beginning, but if ye will come along——"

He stopped where the firs were thick and looked up at a branch four or five yards from the ground.

On the under side, the bark for a foot or two was punctured by small holes.

"Number five shot," said Jim.

As a rule, where firs grow thickly underbrush dies, but a bramble had survived, and its thorny branches had stopped drifting birch and alder leaves. Mike pulled from the thorns a small downy feather and asked Jim to note that the leaves had recently been tossed about.

"Yes," said Jim, "he'd stand here. The gap where the tree fell is opposite, and a pheasant on the branch would cut the sky. But since the shot was at twelve yards, I'd expect to find a quantity of feathers. Then why d'you think he raked the leaves?"

"He came back in the morning early, and raked about for the cartridge he had dropped in the dark, but I would say the shell did not carry a sportsman's load. Ye might asshume he did not come far."

"One could get across to White Scar in about twelve minutes," Jim agreed. "The swine must be stopped! We will bring Bob and watch the wood the first stormy night."

"Then all would be from Goldsike and the magistrates might think ye prejudiced. If ye had an independent witness——"

Jim laughed. "You have some useful talents, old-timer. Hodson is our man."

Hodson agreed to join them, and at dusk one stormy evening they stole separately across the field. The wind in the dark firs was like the noise of surf; stiff branches groaned, and torn clouds drove across the moon, which rose above the black moor's top. Mike fixed their posts, and where Jim took his, slender birches broke the thick firs' ranks. In consequence, for a short distance, the wood was open and he calculated the moon would soon pierce the trees. Leaning against a trunk, he resigned himself to wait.

They had come soon, because the first to arrive ought to hear the other. None had a gun, but Jim carried a thick holly stick and holly is heavy stuff. A large owl swooped noiselessly across a pale patch of sky, and when the wind was quiet Jim heard a rabbit thump outside the wood. The nervous animals were feeding in the pasture and sometimes one beat the turf for a signal. Then the branches tossed and the wind's organ note drowned all other noise. By and by wings rattled. The restless cushats were not watchful. Their wings beat like clappers, but if the first birds were forced to move when dulled by sleep they fluttered about as if they were drunk. They disturbed the pheasants, for Jim heard a drowsy crow, and some then queer, hoarse coughs. A cock pheasant, not fadon off, pushed the hens along a branch, and they might dispute about their perches for two or three minutes. The wind, however, swept the wood, clouds rolled across the moon, and the stiff firs roared in the dark.

Jim reckoned an hour went. He was cold and cramped, but he must not move about, and he cogitated. When he arrived at Goldsike all he wanted was to concentrate on his job. He had nothing to do with the quarrel that began when his grandfather married his second wife, but he had got entangled, and he began to think Kirstine had planned his entanglement. Then he had, unconsciously, baffled Richards' ambition and driven the sullen, revengeful brute to join old Jim's antagonists. It looked as if he hated his recent master as bitterly as he hated the man he thought had supplanted him. Jim admitted he had not much talent for revengeful intrigue, but if he must fight he was willing, and he was stanch to his house.

Green plover called, and the noisy flock got up and circled the field. Somebody had perhaps disturbed them, and a plover's habit is not to steal silently away.

The wind, however, drowned their shrill complaint, and for ten minutes all Jim heard was its deep note in the trees. The clouds had rolled back from the moon, and where the wood was thin, piercing lights splashed the trunks.

Jim reckoned a poacher who knew his job would know the pheasants' favourite haunts. Some were not far off, and for all the wind, a lightly-loaded gun's report would carry two or three hundred yards. He speculated about the plover. As a rule, where a flock settled they stopped and fed, but plover were nervous and sometimes their sentries sent them off by a false alarm. Anyhow, their calling would warn Mike Hodson to watch out.

A stick cracked, and Jim's heart beat. He saw nobody and a fresh gust tossed the trees, but in a few moments quiet that followed the gust a dead branch snapped. The noise was near an open space he had marked, and treading cautiously, he stole through the wood. Caution was needed, because if he advanced the other might hear him.

Branches swung, the piercing lights flickered across the trunks, but about fifty yards off, he heard a pop, as if somebody had pulled a large cork from a bottle. The fellow who loaded the cartridge had not meant the explosion to be loud, but a small load would kill a pheasant on a branch near one's head. The poacher must stop to pick up the bird; he might be forced to feel about for it, and Jim steered for the spot.

In a moment or two all was dark. His boot went under a dead branch, he pitched forward on his hands and knees, and rotten wood smashed. There was now no use in his trying to go noiselessly. The poacher had heard the crash, and when the wind dropped, snapping sticks indicated that he used some speed. Jim, plunging along blindly, tried to calculate. The fellow would not steer for the field, because it was

the obvious line to White Scar. He would climb the wall at the moorfoot and steal along it behind the trees. He would, however, take the shortest line to the wall, and Jim thought he knew he knew it; at all events, he would know if he could but see where he went.

He collided with a trunk. The shock was hard, and he went slower. The trees roared, and among the firs the gloom was thick. In fact, it began to be daunting. The thrill of pursuit got feebler, nothing implied that Mike and Hodson came to help, and to shout would inform the poacher where he was. In the circumstances to hunt the fellow in the dark might be dangerous, particularly since he carried a gun. Yet he mustn't stop. He had begun to think he must at some time front Richards, and he would sooner be done with it.

When the trees were quiet he listened for a sound that might locate his antagonist, for the advantage would be with the man who first heard the other. Jim reckoned he was near the wall and a rather open spot Richards would try to steal across. The trees in front were thinner and behind their branches he saw the sky. Then he stopped and his hands clenched on his stick. Pale moonlight sped across the trunks and touched a man's face. The swift beam got brighter and sparkled on the barrels of a gun.

"Thoo'll come nee farther," said an ominously firm voice.

Jim's impulse was to jump for the brute, but, although his brain perhaps worked mechanically, he reflected. If Richards thought they were alone, he might shoot; not long since a man was shot by a poacher. The gun was pointed at his chest, and although the load, no doubt, was small, at three or four yards' distance half an ounce of shot would smash his breastbone. The shining barrels guarded Richards' chest and head; his legs were not covered.

For a few seconds they fronted each other. Jim's heart beat and he felt the veins on his forehead get tight. On the whole, he was perhaps rather moved by baffled rage than fear, but in the meantime he knew he must not jump. Then he thought Richards' eyelids flickered, as if something excited his curiosity. The gun barrels trembled, and he half turned his head.

Jim swung his body forward, and plunged under the gun. His objective was Richards' legs, and when he got hold, the shock swept the other off his feet. Jim's head was driven into the soil, but he reached for a fresh hold and jammed his knee where he thought Richards' stomach was. Richards grunted, and, locked tight in a savage grapple, they rolled about in the dead birch leaves.

Something struck Jim's shoulder, a glancing blow, and his antagonist's grasp went slack. He got on his feet, although he rather thought somebody pulled him up. Leaning against a tree, he saw Mike stoop over Richards and balance a knobbed stick.

"Will I hit him again?" he asked.

"I doubt if it's necessary," Hodson replied with a breathless laugh.

He picked up an old bottom-lever gun and pulled out the cartridges.

"One is used. The wad is half-way down the other. D'you think he got a bird?"

"Sure he did. It's in the tail av his coat," Mike replied.

With some trouble, he extricated from the lining a battered cock pheasant. The bird's long tail was broken and its plump body had lost its proper shape, as if a heavy object had rolled over it.

"Something the worse for wear, but useful evidence," Hodson remarked, and turned to Jim. "Your face is smeared by blood. Were you hit?"

"I am not much hurt, and I expect the blood is from my nose," said Jim.

"Your luck perhaps was good. Well, I believe you are entitled to seize a poacher when you find him *pursuing game* on your land; but I'd weigh things. The consequences might go farther than his imprisonment."

"So long as he goes to jail, I'll risk it," Jim replied. "If he's fined, I expect he'll force his supporters to put up the wad."

Hodson told Mike to help Richards up. The fellow had taken a nasty knock, and he allowed the others to push him through the wood and across the fields to White Scar. When they reached the house Hodson went for his car, and Jim and Mike guarded the prisoner. Richards said nothing and moodily smoked his pipe. When Hodson returned they started for the police office.

XXX

THE LAST OF THE FACTORY PLAN

RICHARDS went to prison. The magistrates were sportsmen, and from their point of view a poacher was a dangerous criminal. Moreover, he had shot a pheasant after the latest day the law allowed. The pheasant was in court, and nobody could claim that Hodson was a prejudiced witness. In consequence, Richards got the hardest sentence the magistrates were allowed to give.

When Jim got back from the courthouse, dusk had begun to fall, and Railton waited by the fireplace in the panelled room. His sciatica had recently got worse, and turning awkwardly, in order not to jar his leg, he gave Jim an inquiring glance.

"Well?" he said. "I expect Firth advised the fellow to plead guilty, but to deny he threatened to use his gun. You might reach my pipe. I doubt if I can get up."

Jim gave him his pipe and narrated all he heard in court.

"Your justices are scrupulously just," he said. "I think they believed my statement and knew Richards' denial false. They rather obviously think poaching the worst sort of theft, but they allowed that my unsupported tale carried no more weight than his."

The firelight touched Railton's face and it looked as if he smiled.

"One or two I know are not remarkable for intelligence, but you can reckon on their honesty."

"Richards declared he did not put up his gun, and when I went for him like a football player he fell over me," Jim resumed. "All the others saw was our struggle on the ground."

"Had Hodson arrived a few moments sooner, the magistrates might have made it a quarter-sessions case. I imagine they were willing, because the quarter-sessions can order a worse punishment. All the same, the fellow had not done you, and nobody had heard him threaten to do you, grievous bodily harm."

"The worst damage was to my nose, sir, and I myself rammed my head into the ground," Jim agreed.

He lighted a cigarette and for a few minutes Railton quietly smoked his pipe. Then he looked up.

"I don't know if your exploit has helped much. Richards has fresh grounds to hate us and will soon be at large. He is a first-class farm servant, but until you have watched a man at his job you don't know he's competent, and if you did know, you would hesitate to engage a fellow who had been in jail. Richards may be forced to stop with Stoddart, and so long as he is at the dalehead we run some risk."

"Then, you believe Stoddart will take him back?"

"I imagine Stoddart durst not refuse," said Railton dryly. "However, so long as I keep the house, you are the obvious object for his attack. If anything excites your suspicion, you might consult with me."

Jim engaged to do so. For all his bodily weakness, old Jim was yet formidable.

"You would see Watson at the Stores, and he is the town's news-agent," Railton resumed. "Did he talk about the gentlemen we thought might be Firth's company-promoting friends?"

"He found out that one was an engineer. They got back from Staneghyll in the afternoon, stopped at Firth's house for the night, and in the morning started for Manchester."

"Then, I expect our surmise was accurate. Wreay's seeds warehouse is not yet advertised for sale. Does Watson know the trustees' plans?"

"I imagine he tried to find out, but was baffled, sir. The trustees were at Firth's office two or three times. Wreay's investments were scattered, and to put all straight might be a slow job. Watson, rather obviously, did not know much about it."

Railton nodded, but his look was grim.

"Sometimes slowness is dangerous, and Firth's company-promoters do not move fast. By and by Watson might be supplied with something to talk about; but in the meantime there's not much use in speculating. The Athertons get three or four days holiday at Easter. If you like, you might ask them to look us up."

"Very well," said Jim, as carelessly as possible.

"I believe you gave them a standing invitation."

"That is so," Railton agreed. "I doubt if Miss Atherton would use an invitation of the sort. In fact, if you wish to see your friends, I think you ought to state you write by my request. And now you might get a light and give me the newspapers you brought."

Jim wrote the letter, and when he got Mark Atherton's reply he did not try to hide his satisfaction. There was not much use in trying, for he acknowledged Railton keener than him. Two or three weeks went, and then he had a fresh example of the old fellow's perspicacity. When they got breakfast one morning Mrs. Hope said:

"Hodgins' shepherd looked in for about five minutes. Richards is out of jail and started for a pipe-line job in Lancashire."

"I hope the clerk of works will not inquire where he was last employed," Railton remarked. "Is that all, Martha? Your habit is to keep something back."

"Wat himself was in town last night and he's not

yet home. He likely went to see if he could help Miss Kirstine. Firth's gone. They say he started for Manchester on Monday. On Thursday his clerk telegraphed, but he'd not been at the hotel and nobody knows where he is."

Railton nodded; his look was inscrutable.

"Well, I reckoned on it's happening, and I rather think he has gone for good. You might put the toast by my hand. To reach across hurts my leg."

Mrs. Hope did so and when she went off Railton said to Jim:

"You will carry the cheques I got to the bank, and inquire at the Stores why our linseed cake has not been sent. Watson will know all that is yet known about Firth's absconding."

"Then, you think he has *absconded*, sir."

"I think it very possible, and I expect Wreay's trustees agree."

Jim began to see a light, but he said nothing, and Railton went on with his breakfast. It looked as if the quarrel that began fifty years since, at length, was over and old Jim had won; but, so far as one could distinguish, he was not moved. Jim imagined he had from his youth fronted his antagonists with the calm that marked his triumph. In a way, calm like that was daunting.

After breakfast Jim harnessed the pony, and, as Railton had imagined, found Firth's disappearance a subject for talk and speculation at the shops and the *Hollybush*. Two or three facts were not disputed: one of Wreay's trustees, accompanied by a lawyer, called at Firth's office, and at their request the clerk telegraphed to Manchester, but Firth was not at the hotel at which he had stated he meant to stop. His creditors had called a meeting, and their chairman had consulted with the police. Miss Firth had come home, but had gone away on the morning after her arrival.

The surmises were numerous. Firth had for some time had a passport, and was on board a Liverpool liner. The police had sent the captain a Marconigram. Fearing he might be stopped by wireless, he had slipped across to France and taken the train for some country that would not give him up. His clerk was yet at the office, and the creditors would keep him for a time in order to help them find out where their money had gone.

Jim was sorry for Kirstine. Although she was not accountable for her father's dishonesty, she must have got a cruel knock, and he would have liked her to know he sympathized. Firth's servants, however, declared she had not told them where she went, and there was nothing for him to do. Jim admitted with a sense of shabbiness that to find her gone was some relief. When he returned to Goldsike Railton pondered the news.

"Firth's greediness and extravagance broke him," he remarked. "He inherited some money, but I reckon the most part went in rash speculations."

"But Staneghyll is worth a large sum, and he gave five thousand pounds for White Scar."

"Staneghyll is mortgaged, and his buying White Scar was a reckless plunge to mend his fortunes. The money he used was his clients'; had he floated his company, they would not have found out, but the negotiations dragged, and when Wreay's trustees demanded an account Firth was done for. Bob was a hearty old fellow and might have lived for twenty years. As a rule, the risk you think hardly worth weighing is the risk that tips the beam. Firth, however, had, no doubt, fixed his line of retreat, and if his creditors stop him they are luckier than I think."

Three or four days afterwards, a car stopped at Goldsike and two gentlemen got down. One's card stated that he was Mr. Maybury, a Manchester ware-

houseman; the other was Mr. Holroyd, a consulting engineer. When Mrs. Hope showed them in, Jim had arrived for four o'clock tea.

"I and one or two more," said Maybury, "are interested in a new process for the manufacture of cotton cloth. Although we expect to produce first-class stuff, our experiments have been expensive, and until we have a firm market for our goods, we must be satisfied to work on a rather small and economical scale. In the Lancashire towns, overhead costs are large, and we thought we might to some extent use water power. Mr. Firth undertook to inquire about a factory site, and informed us that he had found a suitable spot. He, however, has recently *disappeared*. In the circumstances, I might be allowed to use the word."

"It is perhaps as good as another, and I do not think he could claim it was libellous," Railton agreed.

"Very well. I must risk stating that we do not think his conduct *straight*. He was our agent, but we find that he himself brought the site, hoping, no doubt, that we would be forced to pay him a larger price. The site has some advantages, but in order to use the water for our particular purpose, we must build filtering and precipitating tanks——"

"The water is strongly charged with lime and other minerals," Holroyd remarked, and repeated at some length the arguments Grace had used at Christmas. Then, noting Railton's smile, he asked bluntly: "Do you think Mr. Firth knew the Staneghyll water was not suited for dyeing cotton?"

"When he bought the White Scar, I imagine he did not," Railton replied with dry humour. "Your finding it out afterwards mightly have had something to do with his vanishing." If

"Let's be frank," said Maybury. "We could precipitate the lime, and we could lay a pipe-line to the

Goldsike beck. Either plan would be expensive, and if we build a factory, we must find a counterbalance for the extra cost. Some outcrop coal is quarried on your moor. If we can use the coal, do you think we can agree with you about royalties, wayleaves, water-rights, and so forth?"

Railton frowned and knitted his brows, but when he fronted Maybury his look was dignified.

"I would sooner the factory was not built. For all that, if you can start a useful industry, I must not be an obstacle. The coal is poor and the shallow seam is thin. We ourselves seldom bother to haul a sledge load for the kitchen, and I doubt if you would get the flame you'd need for boiler flues, but Mr. Holroyd is at liberty to examine the outcrop. In the meantime, my housekeeper waits to serve tea. You perhaps will join us?"

They stopped for half an hour, and in the morning Holroyd and two or three workmen climbed the fell. A few days afterwards a letter arrived.

Maybury thanked Railton, but the coal was not steam coal, and Holroyd did not think it underlaid by a deeper seam of better quality. In consequence, after weighing other drawbacks, the syndicate had decided not to go on with the plan. Railton gave Jim the letter.

"It's done with, and I imagine our primitive calm will not again be disturbed. From the city folks' point of view, we are, no doubt, a rather primitive lot."

"Stoddart is yet at Staneghyll," Jim remarked.

"It is possible he will not be here for long. Staneghyll is mortgaged and the creditor has given notice that he will seize the farm. Ar/how, if Stoddart does stop, he will have a fresh landlord."

XXXI

KIRSTINE'S CHAMPION

AT dusk one evening Kirstine got down from Stoddart's digby at the Staneghyll gate. Although Firth's house at the town was sold, his creditor must wait before he would seize the farm, and Kirstine thought to collect some small articles and meet her brother.

Frank arrived the next afternoon, and when he had got some food, carried chairs for himself and his sister to the garden behind the house. In the North spring is bleak, but a south-west wind blew gently up the dale, and although the moor tops were white and melted snow flooded the brawling ghylls, the sun, reflected by the dry-stone wall, was warm. Daffodils pushed their swelling buds through the tangled grass. Brown heath and boggy pasture rolled down to the shining pools in the dale; farther back, the big lake-country hills' white-veined tops cut the serene sky.

Frank studied the spacious landscape moodily. The careless good-humour that was at one time his most attractive quality had vanished, and his mouth was tight. Yet the firm lips rather indicated nervous strain than resolution, his pose was slack, and when he lighted a cigarette he broke the match. Frank's sobriety was not at any time remarkable, and after the knock he had recently taken Kirstine imagined he had tried to brace himself by liquor. Kirstine herself had something of the hardness that marks a shining polished stone. One pictured her cutting softer

material, and nothing hurt her. At all events if she were hurt, one did not know. By and by she gave her brother a scornful glance.

"Are you stopping at your office?" she asked.

"I suppose I must," said Frank. "Unless you have some money, there is not much use in emigrating, and if you have some money, you don't want to go. All I have got is a load of debt, and the Dominions are fastidious about whom they let in. My father's exploit would not help me much——"

He stopped for a moment, and the blood touched his skin when he resumed:

"I mustn't be shabby. After all, he indulged us as far as possible, and he didn't know he'd let us down. If he had floated his company, I expect he'd have been generous. All the same, I hate the horrible notoriety and I hate the control I am forced to use. He is my father, and when I see a group in the drawing-office shove a newspaper out of sight I feel I'd like to run amok and smash the swine. As a rule, however, they use some tact, and one who did not carries my mark—— Well, there is no use in grumbling, and I am happy to know you are provided for."

"Thank you, Frank," said Kirstine, with a queer, hard laugh. "*Provided for* is Victorian, and in neo-Georgian times a young woman must provide for herself. Ted is the provision, and since you like old-fashioned talk, he's chivalrous. As soon as the newspapers printed the tale, he telegraphed that he was on the way and when he arrived he urged an early wedding. In the circumstances, I did not refuse."

"The circle in which Edward Brand moves is on a higher plane than mine, but so far as I know, he's a pretty good sort—something of a lad perhaps; dog's the fashionable term. If you see what I mean, he might need firm control."

"Quite," said Kirstine. "Ted, however, can be steered, and soon after the wedding his reformation will begin. I hope to persuade him that extravagance does not pay and my husband must go soberly."

Frank looked up, and the surprised glance he gave her melted in a grin.

"I am not at all humorous, and I know when I have had enough," Kirstine remarked. "Anyhow, I am not going to risk another crash."

Since she was resolved, Frank imagined her resolve would stand. Kirstine had qualities that he had not. Yet he had always liked his sister. She was a good pal and she did not pretend.

"If I'm allowed to talk about it, I rather thought Wat Hodson would carry you off," he said.

For a moment or two Kirstine brooded, and then she replied with the hard frankness that generally marked her talk:

"Wat is a very good sort; in fact, he is the best I know. He knows me, as Ted does not, but he was willing to run the risk, and when father vanished I refused him for the last time. In a way, I was forced, although it cost me something. All Wat has got is the sheep-walk; he admits he has not the talents he ought to have if he started on a fresh career. When I'm in town with Ted, nobody will bother about *who I was*, and his relations have not much grounds to be fastidious. Had I stopped on the moorside, for as long as I lived, I would be the daughter of the notorious Mr. Firth. For Wat's sake, as well as mine, I durstn't risk it. And the Railtons, who broke my father, would be our neighbours."

"But for Railton, father would not have given the price he did give for White Scar; I expect the old swine cunningly planned the stroke. But do you think he knew about the water?"

Kirstine smiled, a scornful smile, but her eyes sparkled.

"Sometimes you are very dull. Of course, the Railtons knew! The chemist girl, whom Jim will marry, enlightened them. I expect they thought father's resolving to buy the mill a first-class joke."

"Blast the Railtons! They have won and we are done with. All the same, I thought young Jim different—and I imagined you liked the fellow. In fact, not long since——"

"You imagined him my lover? He might have been my lover. And I suppose I thought to carry off Railton's nephew would be something of an exploit."

"Old Jim would have got a nasty knock," Frank agreed. "However, it's rather obvious your plan did not work."

He clenched his fist and brooded. His father was a fugitive, and although the police in the meantime were baffled, might yet go to jail. To some extent, he himself must carry his relation's disgrace, and he had squandered his small inheritance. His sister must marry a fellow for whom he reckoned she had neither love nor respect. It looked as if the Railtons' triumph was complete.

Kirstine knew her brother. Frank's intelligence was not remarkable and since the crash he had obviously indulged. Yet he was stanch to his house, and she knew she could work on his mood. In fact, she had steered him where she had wanted him to go. He was not a formidable champion, but he was the best she had got. Although her habit was to calculate, she allowed revengeful emotion to carry her away. In order to hurt Jim Railton, she and Frank might be hurt, but to feel she struck at her triumphant antagonists would be some comfort. Yet she hesitated and the blood came to her skin.

"I believe only Wat knows about our adventure on the night of the Hunt ball, and he perhaps went to Jim's help as much as mine. We started for Yorkshire, but although I must have stopped for the wedding, we might have arrived at Leicester a few hours afterwards. One could picture Railton's emotions when the telegram stated that his nephew had got a better post."

"Whose wedding? Which post?" Frank inquired impatiently.

"Kate Waltham's, and the bailiff's post at Moorhouse's farm. When I helped Jim compose the telegram, I'd have allowed him to state *a marriage was arranged*——"

"But would you have married your pals' foreman?"

"Jim has some talents," said Kirstine coolly. "I might have pushed him on. Railton hates me, but he'd hate to let a stranger take Goldsike, and by and by he might have sent for his nephew. If he did not, to punish Jim would hurt him worse than he could hurt us. I pictured him, alone at his dreary house, getting older and more infirm, cheated by his servants, and knowing the farm he loved went down. Mrs. Hope cannot carry on for long."

Frank knew his sister's hardness, and he himself hated the Railtons, but he was made of softer stuff and now he studied her, he shrank. Yet he thought her calm pretended. Her skin was touched by angry red and passion sparkled in her eyes.

"Well," he said, "for vindictive calculation, you beat the most revengeful man I ever knew. However, it looks as if you felt young Jim had let you down."

"Sometimes you are not remarkably dull," Kirstine rejoined. "The tale is humiliating, but I think you ought to know——"

Boots splashed in boggy grass, and a man whistled

for a dog. Richards crossed the field on a line that would carry him past the corner of the garden. In a few moments he vanished behind the wall, but Kirstine hesitated. The tale she had planned to tell was humiliating and to work on Frank might be rash. For all that, when she thought about the soapworks girl, she refused to calculate. She was flesh and blood, and she was going to indulge her jealous rage. Richards was gone; she did not hear him creep back across the soft moss behind the wall.

Talking in a queer, hard voice, she narrated her excursion in the storm. For the most part, the narrative was accurate; the implications were not, but they might have persuaded a cleverer audience. Frank's slack mouth got firm, his face got red, and when Kirstine stopped he clenched his fist.

"The d—— swine was afraid to carry on?" he said. "Wat could not have stopped you; I'd have forced him to hand over some petrol, and I might have seized his car. When you think about it, the baffling point is, the fellow was willing to start."

"Oh, well, I expect he has some red blood in his veins, and we planned the adventure at the ball. When you have lived like an old-fashioned Methodist, jazz music is insidious stuff, and he ought not to have risked a modern dance. At all events, we did start, and had not the petrol run out, his pluck might have borne the strain. Then I suppose he reflected that his rashness might cost him Goldsike, and perhaps his modesty was alarmed. After all, he might get another wife, but he would not inherit another farm. In consequence, Wat's arrival was something of a relief."

"I thought him better stuff," Frank said moodily. "However, I expect the Railtons were from the beginning parsimonious, thin-blooded swine. Looks as if we

are down and out ; but they have not done with us."

His glance searched the valley, and the calm grey hills. He saw a shepherd and his dog push through the dead fern by the Goldsike beck ; he did not see Richards crouch behind the wall, six or seven yards off.

" We have had some happy holidays at Staneghyll," he resumed. " We will not have another, and in two or three weeks all that was ours will be gone. Anyhow, I'll spoil Jim Railton's triumph. I can't stop and think about it, and I'm going up the fell."

He carried off his chair and at the house door the legs crashed against the post. A holiday without liquor was not a holiday, and he had brought a supply from the *Hollybush*. A drink might help him cogitate and he splashed a generous measure in the glass. Then he got his pike stick and took the path by the brawling ghyll.

For a few minutes he was sorry he had not gone another way. The melted snow was coming down the fell and its hoarse turmoil jarred his nerves. Water that might drive turbines and looms ran to waste ; but for the lime it carried the Firths might be rich, and where the heath sloped to the fields the Goldsike beck sparkled in the sun. The d—— treacherous Railtons had known the Staneghyll water could not be used for manufacturing. And Jim had mocked Frank's sister and was going to marry the soapworks girl, who had warned him about the lime.

When Frank came down the fell his moodiness was worse, and he took another drink and laboriously wrote a note to Jim. To keep the proper line was awkward and liquor did not help. He must not be vulgarly savage, but to be dignified was hard. In twenty minutes the note was written and he went to the farm yard and called Richards.

"Send the boy across to Goldsike and tell him to wait for a reply. If he goes soon, Jim Railton will be at the house for his four o'clock."

Richards went to the dairy. He did not expect to find the boy, but the maids used hot water and one had carried in a steaming pail. To open the steamed envelope did not occupy him long and he read and put back the note. Frank asked Jim Railton to meet him, and if he could do so in the evening, the White Scar mill was perhaps a convenient spot. Richards' smile was grim.

The jealous, spiteful lass pushed on her brother to punish the man she had wanted but could not get. Some women were like that, but if Frank thought to knock out Jim Railton he had undertaken an awkward job. Richards knitted his brows. If they fought, he might see his opportunity. For example, if Frank, as he expected, was knocked out, his more or less exhausted conqueror might be an easy victim for a fresh antagonist, particularly if he did not know the other was about. Anyhow, Richards resolved, he would be there. He found the byre lad, and sending him with the note, watched for his return.

"Thoo's back seeune," he said. "Has't browt answer?"

"Mr. Railton will be at bobbin mill at half-past six. That's aw," the lad replied.

Richards pondered. When Frank met young Jim, dusk would begin to fall. One might steal up behind the trees and the roar of the flooded mill lead would drown one's steps. Anyhow, he must try it, and if his luck were good he might perhaps punish Railton, and allow young Frank to carry the blame.

When Richards delivered the message Frank got another drink. His habit was not to weigh things and when he was sternly sober his intelligence was not keen. Then, although he had not thought Jim a bad

sort, he had been taught to hate the fellow's house, and now he knew him for the shabby swine he really was. He had not a plan. As a rule, Frank did not bother about a plan. When he fronted Jim Railton he would know what he must do.

XXXII

FRANK LOOKS FOR TROUBLE

DUSK fell calmly. Mist floated about the moors, and Mike, scattering hay for the bullocks in the low field, saw a row of sheep move up the hill. The creatures knew the night would be fine and steered for their favourite haunt at the bottom of a crag. In the evening calm, the bleating of the lambs was musical, but it got faint and farther off, and all Mike heard was the clamour of the beck.

He was a Celt and something of a poet, and although his home was where the Atlantic breaks along the rocks of Donegal, he sensed the elusive charm and beauty that lurks about the dark English hills. An elfin country the quiate slip of a girl said it was. That one had knowledge and feeling ; she loved the cattle in the stalls, and the creatures knew. Grace was her name, and it did not stand for beauty ; when Mike was young, the girls in Donegal were prettier. That one was gracious and good.

The evening got cold, and until the moon rose, it was going to be dark, but Mike loaded his pipe. He must see his bullocks were satisfied. Railton would get the price of them, but until the animals went to market, they were the byreman's. And he would be sorry to see them go.

In Ireland, the grass sprang sooner and the west wind blew soft. The first blackthorn would be flowering in the glens, but he would not see its snowy bloom. When he went home the boys he knew were

gone, and her he'd loved was under the sod all the weary years. He had travelled the long and lonely roads, and now he was going to stop with the hard English folk.

They had not the good manners the right Irish used, but some were kinder than one might think, and when he joined the Railtons he took up with the best. He minded the day when he got off the cars at Calgary, and knew himself raw, and hungry, and forlorn. A tall man stopped the Immigration bureau boss, and Mike heard the other say:

"I have a Mick who looks like a hayseed. Maybe he would suit."

The tall man signed, and for a moment or two studied Mike. His mouth was firm and his glance searching.

"Do you know anything about cattle?" he inquired.

"To boast would not persuade ye, but ye might thry me, sir."

"Why, that's so," said Railton and pulled out two dollars. "Get some food and wait for me at the livery yard."

It began like that, twenty years since, and maybe more. Railton trusted him, and although he was a stranger he got standard pay. Mike respected the stern man, but he loved his son. The Railtons were good masters, and although he might have bought a cothouse in Ireland, he was going to stop with them. When he was no longer useful, young Jim would not turn him down. By and by Jim would rule Goldsike, and the girl you might think a Quaker would be mistress. Mike knew the old fella's hope, although Jim perhaps did not. Anyhow, Mike would be happy to be their servant.

For all his romantic sentiment, Mike was shrewdly practical and had inherited a talent for intrigue, and when he saw an indistinct figure behind the thorns in

the lonning he was interested. The fellow, keeping the gloom by the wall, stole across the field, but Mike thought he knew him, and he carried a stick. Where a few slabs helped one across another wall, he crept through the hoghole underneath, as if he did not want his figure to be conspicuous on the top.

A man whose object was honest would climb the stile, and Mike surmised he'd be after nothing good. Anyhow, if one used some caution, one might find out, and when Richards stopped by the wood near the bobbin mill in order to see if he was alone, Mike was behind a neighbouring hedge.

Richards vanished in the wood and Mike went under a fence. The other was not far in front; Mike heard dead leaves rustle and sometimes a stick cracked. When one wore the sort of boots English farm servants used, to go noiselessly was hard. Although Mike trod like a cat, his advance was not altogether quiet, but since Richards pushed ahead it looked as if he did not know another was in the wood.

By and by Mike located him behind a thick holly bush, and he himself took cover in some tangled briars. All was now quiet but for the throbbing beck, light mist crept down the fellside, and the evening was serene. Yet, about forty yards off, Richards watched the path to the mill, and perhaps because Mike sprang from romantic stock, he sensed black hate and brooding cruelty.

For the most part the trees were birches. The thin, bare branches cut the sky, the trunks were not close, and after a few minutes Mike saw Frank Firth in the field path. He went fast and resolutely, but Mike noted something queer about his step and pose. A man might walk like that if he wanted to persuade himself he was not drunk.

When he climbed the fence he broke a rotten bar,

but there was no noise or movement by the holly bush. Richards obviously knew who the other was, and allowed him to pass his hiding-place. Frank did not move quietly, and when he was in front Richards stole after him. Mike stole after Richards, and when they stopped, the distance between them was shorter and only a few trees stood between them and the opening by the mill lead.

Mike reckoned Richards waited for somebody Firth thought to meet, and he reckoned he knew who it was. The scheming girl at Staneghyll was the sort of girl about whom men from the beginning had fought, and when one was young one did not stop to think if the girl were worth fighting for. Mike and Mistress Hope knew the besom, but if she had pushed on her brother, the fella' was looking for trouble. The Railtons were not the folk a man of sense would annoy.

Well, Richards watched Frank, who waited for Jim, and did not know another watched them both. He carried a short, thick stick; Mike had brought the fork with which he *scaled* the bullocks' hay.

Jim, following the path by the waterside, knitted his brows. He was sorry for Kirstine and, to some extent, for Frank, but she had no grounds to think he had let her down, and since their excursion he had hoped she would leave him alone. The part she had forced on him was rather humiliating than humorous, but after all, a man, like a young woman, was entitled to refuse to be run away with. All the same, if Frank thought his sister slighted, which was perhaps the proper word, he must try to satisfy the fellow.

"Hello!" he said when he saw the other. "To meet you was awkward, but you sent for me."

"And you wouldn't run away?" said Frank. "Well, the Railtons' nerve is notoriously good. I expect you know why I did send for you?"

Jim thought his pose rather queerly braced, but, for all its hint of passion, his voice was level.

"To begin with, I'll allow you to state your grievance."

"You are a cautious lot," Frank rejoined. "However, I'll try to do so, and you'll have the right to reply, if you can."

For a minute or two he let himself go. Liquor had something to do with his passion, but Jim, coolly studying him, knew his anger sincere. The Railtons had cheated his mother and stolen her inheritance. Old Jim, however, was not satisfied, and when he forced up the price of White Scar he planned Firth's ruin. Railton meant him to believe he wanted the mill for a factory, but he knew, and Jim knew, the water could not be used for manufacturing. In consequence Firth had given nearly three thousand pounds more than the estate's just value. The shabby trick was marked by the low cunning the Railtons' habit was to use. And so forth.

"I sent Mr. Firth a warning he must not buy White Scar," Jim remarked.

"Because you reckoned he would think you bluffed. Did you warn him about the water?"

The question was awkward, and although Jim had tried for calm, he began to be annoyed.

"The sale was by public auction and all were entitled to bid. I myself had nothing to do with the old dispute, and when I arrived at Goldsike all I wanted was to study my job. Since you and your folk hated us, you ought to have left me alone."

"You imply that we did not?" Frank shouted. "Are you going to hint that my sister asked you to be friendly? That she *courted you*?"

The blood leaped to Jim's skin. He mustn't state that Kirstine had done something like that, although he might be justified.

"The ground is awkward, Frank. I think you had better let it go. I was willing to be friendly; but I have stood for something at your people's hands and begin to feel I have had enough."

"You have had enough!" Frank exploded. "What about us? Must we be humiliated because you stopped to reckon all your plunge might cost you? Why Kirstine trusted you baffles me, but it looks as if she did. And you allowed her other lover to smuggle her back home. You are a noble example of a romantic frontiersman."

For a moment Jim was quiet. Control got very hard, and Frank, from his point of view, was perhaps entitled to jeer. In fact, he had forced Jim into a situation from which he saw no line of retreat he could decently take. Anyhow, he was not going to argue that he was rather Kirstine's victim than her lover.

"Then, your grievance is, I did not carry your sister off? If you think about it, you're not very logical," he said.

Frank's arm and shoulder swung and Jim reeled back. The dark trees revolved and he vaguely knew his lips were cut. Now he certainly had had enough, and since the meddling fool did not know where to stop, he must be taught. He braced up and the knock Frank took drove him against a trunk. Frank came back. Liquor had fired his blood and he felt himself the avenger of all the wrongs his folk had borne.

The light was going and under the mill's high walls the gloom got deep. Jim did not remark that his antagonist was not altogether sober. The fellow had forced him to fight, but he was willing, and he fought for his house. He would see this particular Firth did not bother him another time.

Although Frank was recklessly savage, Jim was cool. He stopped the other's awkward rush by a smashing

knock, and then was satisfied to keep away. A minute went and he knew he was going to win. Frank's face was indistinct, but he lurched about slackly when Jim changed ground, and one heard his jerky, laboured breath. All the same, he was harder stuff than Jim had thought, and neither could keep it up for long. In the meantime, their audience waited. Mike's code did not allow him to meddle, and Richards did not see a useful opportunity. If he put Railton in the mill lead, nobody must be about.

Jim's luck turned. When Frank rushed, and he changed ground, his boot went under a bramble. He staggered and while he tried to recover, Frank was upon him. His fist drove Jim off his feet and he crashed in the grass. Frank lurched past and shocked against a tree. Liquor, strain and the collision perhaps dulled his brain. All he knew was, he had won, and since the mill seemed to heave about and his legs were not steady, he was going home. In fact, he perhaps ought to start before Jim got up; but he would sooner not stumble about in the dark wood, and he took the path by the lead for the dam, which was the way Richards imagined Jim would go.

For a moment or two Jim did not get up, and when he was on his feet he did not see Frank. Somebody, however, was in the path thirty or forty yards off, and he must go after the fellow before he vanished in the gloom. Frank must not be allowed to imagine he had knocked him out.

Branches cracked and another man jumped from the wood. It looked as if he swung a stick; the first lurched forward, and was gone. The other threw down his stick and sped along the path. Jim braced up sternly. He must get action; Frank was in the mill lead and must not go under the wheel. If he were jammed in the iron frames and drowned, it might look like murder. But he mustn't drown.

Jim moved fast. When he dropped on the stones by the channel, a dark object rolled along in the flood a few yards up stream. Bracing his knees and toes against the stones, he reached out and seized the object. The jerk pulled him forward, his chest slipped across the greasy moss, and he was in the lead.

After a moment or two his feet touched bottom, and holding Frank, he tried to get up. The current rolled them over and drove his head against the wall. His fingers clawed the stones, and then he went down in the black dark. When his head broke the surface, the mill walls sped by, and he knew he and Frank shot down the inclined lead like logs in a sawmill flume. Nothing could stop them, but it looked as if somebody were going to try.

Three or four yards down stream, a man threw a thin pole across the channel. Jim did not hear him shout, but he knew he must seize the pole and hold on for his, and Frank's, life. The pole bent, and since he supported Frank, he could use but one hand. He vaguely understood that if he let go his load, he might perhaps crawl out, but people might believe he first put the other in the lead. Frank was a meddling fool, but he didn't deserve to drown. Then the end of the pole slipped from a joint in the wall, a steel prong tore his hand, and they resumed their glissade down the lead.

Sometimes they were on the top, and sometimes they bumped along the bottom. Frank was obviously unconscious, for when Jim tried to get on his feet he did not help. There was, however, no use in trying; if they got through the culvert, they would not stop until the current jammed them in the undershot wheel.

Jim knew when they were in the culvert. All was dark and the water roared in his ears. Then air flowed into his lungs and he saw foam leap about an obstacle in

front. Frank struck the wheel, and Jim, behind him, felt his slack body take the shock. They did not go under; since his length was greater than the wheel's breadth, the current jammed him across the iron rims and hammered his side against a broken float.

When Jim was thrown against Frank, his hand touched rough iron and fastened mechanically on the object. Angry waves splashed across his head, and the noise in the wheel was like the roar of a waterfall. All the same, he was not pulled down, for the most part of the floats were gone, and the flood was near the top of the channel. If he could get his foot against the iron frames, he might with one hand reach the stones.

His leg went under Frank's body, but his boot struck a cross-brace, and he got a firmer hold on the rim. Then a shout pierced the turmoil, and it looked as if somebody was on the coping of the lead. The fellow seized Frank, and Jim tried to lift his unconscious load. The man on the bank pulled strongly, and after a savage struggle they got Firth on the wall. Then a hand fastened in Jim's clothes, and he was lying in the stones and labouring for breath. Somebody touched him and he knew Mike's voice.

"There's life in the fella! I'm for Braithwaite's."

When Jim got up nobody was about. His heart beat, to breathe hurt, and a deafening roar was in his ears. Stooping by Frank, he tried to turn him with his face to the soil. When somebody was drowned, it was the first thing you did; and then you worked his arms. But he could not move him, and Frank was not drowned. Somebody had knocked him out with a club, and the flood had hammered them against the stones and wheel. If some bones were broken, he ought not to be moved—

Jim let it go. His brain refused to work, the ground

heaved, and he was horribly cold.. All he afterwards remembered was, two or three men arrived, and Mike steered him through the wood, and put him on board the digby he had used to carry the hay. At Goldsike Jim was given a hot drink and Bob and Mike put him to bed.

XXXIII

THE CONQUEROR

MIKE, in the kitchen at Goldsike, waited for Bob to fasten his boots. The boots were freshly greased and weighed nearly a pound less than those he generally used on the hills. Mrs. Hope put up some sandwiches, and Railton leaned against the table.

"Sleep is all he will be needing," Mike remarked. "I would not say but Mr. Firth might bother the doctors. Battered he was, an' his arm broke; ye could just feel the warmth of life was not gone out of him."

"You are satisfied the blow was meant for my nephew?" said Railton.

"I'll declare that same to a magistrate. I was lying maybe ten yards behind the fella' and it dark in the wood. Ye could hear, but ye could not see, and when one went down the other took the road ye would expect Mr. Jim to go. Then, knowing them, he would not think Mr. Firth the conqueror."

Railton nodded. "Richards went up the dale. Had he gone down, he would not have got a train, and the telegraph follows the main roads. It's possible he believes he killed his man; but since he thought him Jim, he might have stolen quietly back to White Scar and allowed Firth to be suspected. However, I suppose he saw you."

"I durst not wait; wan of them was in the beck. I would not say he knew me, but when he saw he had a

witness the scheme was spoiled. Now he'll be for the hills."

"He'll tak' the fell," Bob agreed. "If he went for South Tyne and Allendale, he might be stopped at Hexham. He'll likely ho'd t'other way and gan down by Wearhead. But he's gone an hour and we must start."

Railton calculated their shortest line across the high backbone of England was twenty miles; snow covered the moor tops and the dark bogs were soft. Then only the moorfolk could keep the line, and few could go as fast as Richards. For all that, when he studied the two were willing to try he thought their chance good. Neither was young, but the six-foot shepherd could go where a mountain sheep could go, and the lighter-built Irishman was hard and muscular.

"A long road and a hard road, but if you are down from the hills before your man, your reward is twenty pounds," he said.

"We's try it. Come on, Mike," said Bob.

The kitchen door shut and they were gone. Railton smiled, a grim smile.

"Goldsike is well served. If Richards keeps his freedom, he must go like a fox."

Richards' speed was for long a subject for argument at village inns. He had got away an hour in front, and in the dark there was nothing to show the way he went. He knew his line and he knew the fells as perhaps but a few of the moorfolk knew them. Moreover, he had some grounds to think one would soon be on his track.

Railton had not boasted. Goldsike was well served, and when Richards struck his treacherous blow he released Bob from the traditions that rule his sort. For once, the shepherd was frankly willing to give a man with whom he had eaten and laboured to the

police. Mike rather hoped he might be justified to drown the fellow in a bog.

The hillslopes oozed water and the treacherous screes were wet. Where they took a sheep-path the gravel rolled down in tinkling waves, and on the flat-topped benches perhaps only an Irish bogtrotter could have followed the shepherd across the slimy *flows*. Mist floated about the high tops, where the wet snow was deep in the tangled heather, but sometimes they saw pale stars and the Great Bear pointed to the pole. Bob, however, did not study the sky. He perhaps used qualities that guide the moorland fox, and where he reckoned a pike was they saw the piled stones.

In two hours, they had climbed sixteen hundred feet, plunged down to a flooded stream, and climbed again five hundred feet across mire and the stones long heather hid. At midnight, they stopped for breath by a pike on the main watershed. A chill wind drove back the mist, and since the moon rode high they saw the white moors roll back to Durham and Yorkshire. In the South, a lofty white top with a broken edge cut the sky.

"If he was for Tyne and Hexham, he'd turn left and follow the syke, but I reckon he'd sooner keep t' fells than Newcassel road," said Bob. "We bear right by black flow, and in morning we'll likely find out if he's for Durham or Darlington."

Mike nodded. He knew the Rockies eastern slope and the Alberta tablelands, but he had not thought them lonelier than the dark English hills.

"Then let us be going while our shoes are good," he said.

They turned half-right for the South-East, and waded an angry beck by an old lead mine. The miners' road carried them down hill and round a soft bog; and then they took a wet scree and climbed back to the snow. The melting stuff was thin and the last

they trod, for the white tops rolled farther back, and they plunged down to the peat and the black ravines, where the noisy becks ran to the North Sea.

At daybreak, they followed a lonning to a lonely farm. A dog barked, smoke floated from the chimney, and they pushed back the door. Pale reflections from the grate touched the walls, and an old woman was occupied at a table where a candle guttered in the draught.

"Yiss," she said, "t' dog barked, and we thowt somebody went by. It might be half an hour sin'. If you'll can stop til my man is back from byre, you're welcome to a sup tea."

"And now it's but half an hour," Mike said to Bob. "An' he not knowing he's follid, while we know he's in front. For all that, if he got a motor 'bus, thirty minutes might put him ten miles on his road——" He turned to the woman. "We thank ye, mistress, but we cannot stop."

At the end of the lonning, a green track crossed a slope chequered by neat brown squares, where in autumn fern was cut. Then the first stone wall climbed the hill, and they went down the steep pastures to a curving, stony road. At the dalehead they saw the first battered thorns, and by and by the sun touched a clump of firs. Farther down the valley, thin smoke floated from a hollow between the folding hills.

A white village straggled along a noisy beck, and Bob steered for a blacksmith's shop. The smith stopped his bellows, and the white flame on the hearth sank.

"First 'bus is gone twenty minutes sin' ; she starts punctual," he said. "Next is at eleven o'clock. Yiss, a stranger got up when she was going. Looked like a shepherd. I'd niver seen him before."

Mike looked about. In Canada, settlements smaller than the village, and farther from the towns, were

supplied with telephones. He saw no posts and wires. Only a few battered thorns followed the stone walls down the dale.

"Where's the pòlis?" he asked.

The smith told him, and in five minutes he narrated to a young officer all he thought the other ought to know about Richards' exploit at the mill. The constable wrote down his statement, asked him to put his hand to it, and got up. Mike remarked that his uniform was spotless and his thick boots shone. And he did not trouble you with questions that had nothing to do with the matter. Mike thought him a bright young fella'.

"Our inspector may want to see you at the office nine miles off down the dale," he said. "If I get you a bicycle, will you ride on with me?"

"Indeed, I will not," said Mike. "If ye had asked me ten hours since, I might. Now the inspector must wait for the motor 'bus."

The other told him where to go, carried his bicycle down the steps, and took the road. Mike and Bob went to the smithy and ate their sandwiches by the fire. At noon they reached a small market town and got some news at the police office. A stranger had got off the 'bus at a spot five miles from the town, and was last seen in a farm road running south, from which it looked as if he had turned back towards the hills. The driver's description of him and Mike's portrait of Richards agreed. The police had used the telegraph and a constable on a motor bicycle had been sent off to inquire at the moorside farms, but so far as they had yet found out, only a ploughman going to his work had seen the stranger.

"We lost him by twenty minutes," said Bob. "He'll be away for the limestone country beyond the moors I know, and we're deeun. There's nea use in boddering. We'll gan home."

Travelling by bus and train, they arrived late in the evening, and Railton weighed their tale.

"We have done with Richards," he remarked. "I doubt if the police will find him, but he durst not come back. For a time, he'll probably keep the moors; and then I dare say he will steal off to the South. Where there are dairy cattle, the fellow will get a job."

"He kens the fells as far as Lunehead like a tod," Bob agreed.

"But in the meantime?" said Jim. "For three or four weeks, he would not get much chance to steal off."

"The county police are not numerous, and in the limestone country one might live underground for a month. The moors are honeycombed by pot-holes and caves, and one can use heather for fire and bed. Then I believe Richards has some relations who might supply him with food. There is of course a chance of his falling down a pot-hole into a subterranean river."

Jim imagined nobody would grieve for the fellow. He himself had got some nasty knocks, and his arms and back and legs yet hurt. In the morning Railton had sent to inquire for Frank, who had been carried to Staneghyll. Mrs. Stoddart informed the messenger that his arm was broken and one side his face was *smashed*. She thought he had got concussion, and the doctor was bothered about something else.

Next day Jim went across, but was told Kirstine could see nobody, and was yet anxious for her brother. He went again, and a nurse stated that Mr. Firth was mending, and Miss Firth thanked him for his inquiries. Jim resolved he would not go another time. It looked as if Frank got better, and if Kirstine would sooner be left alone, he was resigned. In fact, to meet her might be embarrassing.

Two or three weeks went; and then a boy from Staneghyll brought a message; Frank hoped Jim

would look him up in the afternoon. Jim went across, and was shown into an old-fashioned room where Frank's couch was pushed up to the window. A bowl of daffodils and some grapes and magazines occupied the ledge, and a wood fire snapped cheerfully in the grate. It looked as if somebody had done all that was possible for the sick man's comfort.

Frank rested against three or four pillows. Jim thought his hands horribly thin and his skin as white as the bandage that covered one side of his face. Above the bandage, a large, dark-coloured mark crossed his forehead. Turning his head awkwardly, he gave Jim a smile.

"I reckoned on your being a sport," he said. "In three or four days the doctor hopes to send me off, and I felt I ought to see you before I start."

Jim replied politely that to know the other was well enough to be moved was some satisfaction, and inquired where he was going.

"Some pals of Kirstine's have asked us to their house in the South. Since I shall not for some time be an interesting guest, I admit they're kind; but my sister perhaps was firm. Anyhow, she has looked after me nobly, and I doubt if I could have *stuck* my lodgings. However, it's not important, and two things must be said—I must thank you for pulling me from the lead; and when we disputed I was two parts drunk. Now you know, you'll perhaps agree that my remarks did not carry the weight you perhaps thought."

Jim smiled, as if he sympathized. After all, Frank must refuse to admit he had found out his sister had cheated him and had, for a purpose of her own, worked on his revengeful mood.

"Why, that's all right. And then, you see, Mike really pulled us out. But let's talk about something else. Since you'll be off in a few days, and we have friends coming down for Easter, I expect I shall not

see Kirstine. I hope she'll allow me to compliment her on your recovery. The afternoon is fine, and I suppose she has gone for a walk."

Frank looked up and his glance was humorous.

"You mustn't imagine your visit had something to do with it, although I acknowledge I fixed a time when I knew she would not be about. Our drawbacks are pretty obvious, but nobody doubts Kirstine's pluck. She has gone to the town for some small articles I want, and I think she went because the doctor discreetly offered to bring up the stuff. You can picture the curiosity she will excite, and the speculations if she knows where her father is and whether she can pay for the goods. At all events, my sister could do so."

Jim frowned. To be done with Kirstine was something of a relief, but he did not want her hurt.

"Nobody but Mike and my uncle knows we fought," he said. "Our shepherd believes Richards will cheat the police, and Mike certainly will not talk. You couldn't get a word from the fellow he thought would annoy me. That's something. Am I allowed to inquire about your plans?"

"I don't know," said Frank, in a brooding voice. "My pals at the office use some tack, but I doubt if I can stick it. Notoriety like ours is rather a load, and the doctor imagines I'll carry Richards' mark all my life. To look like a gargoye is not much help in a city career. In fact, since my brains are not first class, I've begun to think I might use my muscles. I believe Canada has some advantages. What do you think about the plan?"

"You might hit on worse, but in Canada you must sweat for all you get."

"Oh, well, when I am forced, I'm willing to work; but I admit I mightn't know where, and how, to begin."

Jim crossed the floor to a little writing-cabinet he imagined was Kirstine's. In England, he thought Frank must pay for his father's fault; in the North-West he might yet make good. He wrote a letter to Redmayne and gave Frank the envelope.

"Very well. This fellow is a good sort, in fact he's one of the best, and the foothill country is as good as another. Anyhow, if you do fix on Canada, I reckon he would, for my sake, start you on the proper road."

"You are one of the best," Frank rejoined, and for a few moments brooded. Then he resumed: "It looks as if we had come to the end of the quarrel my grandmother began. I don't know if old Jim did cheat her, and it's possible he did not, but her resolve to punish him has cost us much—My father is broken, I expect nobody will look at me without shrinking, and to know the knock I got was meant for you is not much comfort. When you think about it, the brute's spoiling my youthful beauty is rather a grim joke. Well, the old lady is long since gone, but she left us an expensive legacy."

Jim said nothing, but he agreed. The revengeful woman had let loose forces more dangerous than she perhaps knew; and another of her sort had come near to being accountable for a tragedy. But there was no use in philosophizing about things like that.

"Do you know where Mr. Firth is?" he asked.

"I do not," said Frank. "The queer thing is, you think I would tell you; but after all, if I did know, I might. You're not shabby, and the winner can afford to be generous. Still I'm not disturbed about my father. He has talents I have not, and I expect he will yet mend his fortune. If, and when, he does so, we will hear from him. We have not much grounds to boast, but, in a way, the old man is stanch—Well, to talk soon tires me, and I dare say you have got a

useful job. If I emigrate, I'll use your letter—Good-bye, Jim."

Jim gave him his hand and went off silently.

On the Thursday before Easter, he and his dog climbed the hill to the station. The Athertons' train would not arrive for ten or twelve minutes, but another went south, and by and by a car rolled up to the arch and Kirstine Firth got down. Jim imagined she did not see him; at all events, she signalled a porter and turned to help somebody in the car. Jim waited. He would sooner Kirstine had gone by another train, but he was not going to steal away. Then he saw Frank awkwardly get down from the step, and he advanced and gave him a steadying hand.

Frank's face was yet colourless, and covered for the most part by a strapped linen pad; one arm was under his loose coat, and he moved slackly. When Jim helped him up the bridge steps he apologized in a breathless voice for his awkwardness.

"You mustn't talk," said Jim. "To get down will be easier, but you might lean on me."

He did not want to talk. At Staneghyll he and Frank had said all that might be said, and to see Kirstine superintending the moving of the luggage was some relief. When she joined them the train rolled into the station, and they put Frank on board. Then she came back to the door and gave Jim a baffling smile.

"Thank you, Jim," she said. "I don't know if it is strange that you should help us off; but the important thing is, we will soon be gone. If it's some comfort, you are a generous conqueror."

"Next stop Hawes," said a porter, and banged the door.

The whistle blew, wheels rolled, and Jim, on the bridge, saw the train vanish round a curve in the valley. Then an advancing plume of steam blew across the trees, and he went back to the platform.

The train stopped and the Athertons got down. Mark picked up some light luggage a passenger handed out ; Grace stooped when a white and sable dog pushed his head against her knee. Then she looked up and saw Jim, and he thought faint colour touched her skin. Touching the dog's head for a moment, she gave Jim her hand.

"He's a dear ! To know one is not forgotten is very nice," she said.

THE END.